



AESTHETICS

A COMPREHENSIVE ANTHOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

EDITED BY STEVEN M. CAHN, STEPHANIE ROSS,
AND SANDRA SHAPSHAY

WILEY Blackwell

Aesthetics

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Second Edition

Edited by
Steven M. Cahn, Stephanie Ross,
and
Sandra Shapshay

WILEY Blackwell

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Preface

The study of aesthetics concerns the arts broadly conceived, as well as the nature of aesthetic experience, which includes our responses to beauty, sublimity, ugliness, and other such qualities found in works of art, nature, the built environment, and the course of everyday life. Although the term “aesthetics” to denote this area of study goes back only to the 18th century with the work of Alexander Baumgarten, the field has had a long and distinguished history dating back to classical antiquity. Aesthetics is currently the scene of provocative philosophical exploration, and one which has become increasingly connected to work in disciplines outside of philosophy such as art history, psychology, neuroscience, evolutionary biology, gender studies, and critical race theory. This comprehensive collection of Western historical and contemporary sources offers instructors the opportunity to construct courses in aesthetics combining as wished classic works along with recent contributions that afford students a sense of the rich history as well as the cutting edge of the discipline. The aim to bring this second edition firmly into the 21st century is evidenced with the introduction to Part I Classic Sources. As in the previous edition, we begin with a selection from Paul Oskar Kristeller’s “The Modern System of the Arts,” which, until recently, had been taken to be the definitive proof that the concept of “fine arts” (the “system” comprised of painting, sculpture, architecture,

music, and poetry) originated with Batteaux in the 18th century. But this selection is now followed by James O. Young’s 2015 paper, challenging this orthodoxy, and arguing that these “fine arts” really coincide with Plato and Aristotle’s notion of the “imitative arts,” and thus is not truly a “modern” system at all. Students and instructors are invited to explore Part I with this recent historiological controversy in mind. Other major updates to this edition include: the addition of important 20th century texts by W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke on the intersection of race, politics, and the arts; newer translations of texts by Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer, as well as newly excerpted selections from G.W.F. Hegel, Leo Tolstoy, and R.G. Collingwood; the inclusion of additional modern texts on the relationship between art and morality (e.g. J.-J. Rousseau’s “Letter to M. d’Alembert on the Theatre”), and on tragedy (e.g. with David Hume’s “Of Tragedy”); and a significantly re-edited Part III Contemporary Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art curated and introduced by Stephanie Ross. The contemporary section, with selections from Amie L. Thomasson, Mary Mothersill, Eileen John, Jenefer Robinson, A.W. Eaton, Mary Devereaux, Yuriko Saito, and Carolyn Korsmeyer, presents a more gender-balanced view of the field, and acknowledges the robust contribution women philosophers have made to present-day aesthetics.

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Part I

Classic Sources

The Modern System of the Arts

Paul Oskar Kristeller

Paul Oskar Kristeller (1905–99) was
Professor of Philosophy at
Columbia University.

I

The fundamental importance of the eighteenth century in the history of aesthetics and of art criticism is generally recognized. To be sure, there has been a great variety of theories and currents within the last two hundred years that cannot be easily brought under one common denominator. Yet all the changes and controversies of the more recent past presuppose certain fundamental notions which go back to that classical century of modern aesthetics. It is known that the very term “Aesthetics” was coined at that time, and, at least in the opinion of some historians, the subject matter itself, the “philosophy of art,” was invented in that comparatively recent period and can be applied to earlier phases of Western thought only with reservations. It is also generally agreed that such dominating concepts of modern aesthetics as taste and sentiment, genius, originality and creative imagination did not assume their definite modern meaning before the eighteenth century. Some scholars have rightly noticed that only the eighteenth century produced a type of literature in which the various

arts were compared with each other and discussed on the basis of common principles, whereas up to that period treatises on poetics and rhetoric, on painting and architecture, and on music had represented quite distinct branches of writing and were primarily concerned with technical precepts rather than with general ideas. Finally, at least a few scholars have noticed that the term “Art,” with a capital A and in its modern sense, and the related term “Fine Arts” (Beaux Arts) originated in all probability in the eighteenth century.

In this paper, I shall take all these facts for granted, and shall concentrate instead on a much simpler and in a sense more fundamental point that is closely related to the problems so far mentioned, but does not seem to have received sufficient attention in its own right. Although the terms “Art,” “Fine Arts” or “Beaux Arts” are often identified with the visual arts alone, they are also quite commonly understood in a broader sense. In this broader meaning, the term “Art” comprises above all the five major arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry. These five constitute the irreducible nucleus of the modern system of the arts, on which all writers and thinkers seem to agree. On the other hand, certain other arts are sometimes added to the scheme, but with less regularity, depending on the different views and interests of the authors concerned: gardening, engraving and the decorative

Paul Oskar Kristeller, from “The Modern System of the Arts” in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12(4), 1951 (Part I), pp. 496–515, 521–522, 525–526 and 13(1), 1952 (Part II), pp. 20–21, 24–29, 32–39, 42. © 1951, 1978 University of Pennsylvania Press. Reproduced with permission of University of Pennsylvania Press.

arts, the dance and the theatre, sometimes the opera, and finally eloquence and prose literature.

The basic notion that the five "major arts" constitute an area all by themselves, clearly separated by common characteristics from the crafts, the sciences and other human activities, has been taken for granted by most writers on aesthetics from Kant to the present day. It is freely employed even by those critics of art and literature who profess not to believe in "aesthetics"; and it is accepted as a matter of course by the general public of amateurs who assign to "Art" with a capital A that ever narrowing area of modern life which is not occupied by science, religion, or practical pursuits.

It is my purpose here to show that this system of the five major arts, which underlies all modern aesthetics and is so familiar to us all, is of comparatively recent origin and did not assume definite shape before the eighteenth century, although it has many ingredients which go back to classical, medieval and Renaissance thought. I shall not try to discuss any metaphysical theories of beauty or any particular theories concerning one or more of the arts, let alone their actual history, but only the systematic grouping together of the five major arts. This question does not directly concern any specific changes or achievements in the various arts, but primarily their relations to each other and their place in the general framework of Western culture. Since the subject has been overlooked by most historians of aesthetics and of literary, musical or artistic theories, it is hoped that a brief and quite tentative study may throw light on some of the problems with which modern aesthetics and its historiography have been concerned.

II

The Greek term for Art (*τέχνη*) and its Latin equivalent (*ars*) do not specifically denote the "fine arts" in the modern sense, but were applied to all kinds of human activities which we would call crafts or sciences. Moreover, whereas modern aesthetics stresses the fact that Art cannot be learned, and thus often becomes involved in the curious endeavor to teach the unteachable, the ancients always understood by Art something that can be taught and learned. Ancient state-

ments about Art and the arts have often been read and understood as if they were meant in the modern sense of the fine arts. This may in some cases have led to fruitful errors, but it does not do justice to the original intention of the ancient writers. When the Greek authors began to oppose Art to Nature, they thought of human activity in general. When Hippocrates contrasts Art with Life, he is thinking of medicine, and when his comparison is repeated by Goethe or Schiller with reference to poetry, this merely shows the long way of change which the term Art had traversed by 1800 from its original meaning. Plato puts art above mere routine because it proceeds by rational principles and rules, and Aristotle, who lists Art among the so-called intellectual virtues, characterizes it as a kind of activity based on knowledge, in a definition whose influence was felt through many centuries. The Stoics also defined Art as a system of cognitions, and it was in this sense that they considered moral virtue as an art of living.

The other central concept of modern aesthetics also, beauty, does not appear in ancient thought or literature with its specific modern connotations. The Greek term *καλόν* and its Latin equivalent (*pulchrum*) were never neatly or consistently distinguished from the moral good. When Plato discusses beauty in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, he is speaking not merely of the physical beauty of human persons, but also of beautiful habits of the soul and of beautiful cognitions, whereas he fails completely to mention works of art in this connection. An incidental remark made in the *Phaedrus* and elaborated by Proclus was certainly not meant to express the modern triad of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. When the Stoics in one of their famous statements connected Beauty and Goodness, the context as well as Cicero's Latin rendering suggest that they meant by "Beauty" nothing but moral goodness, and in turn understood by "good" nothing but the useful. Only in later thinkers does the speculation about "beauty" assume an increasingly "aesthetic" significance, but without ever leading to a separate system of aesthetics in the modern sense. Panaetius identifies moral beauty with decorum, a term he borrows from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and consequently likes to compare the various arts with each other and with the moral life. His doctrine is known chiefly

through Cicero, but it may also have influenced Horace. Plotinus in his famous treatises on beauty is concerned primarily with metaphysical and ethical problems, but he does include in his treatment of sensuous beauty the visible beauty of works of sculpture and architecture, and the audible beauty of music. Likewise, in the speculations on beauty scattered through the works of Augustine there are references to the various arts, yet the doctrine was not primarily designed for an interpretation of the "fine arts." Whether we can speak of aesthetics in the case of Plato, Plotinus or Augustine will depend on our definition of that term, but we should certainly realize that in the theory of beauty a consideration of the arts is quite absent in Plato and secondary in Plotinus and Augustine.

Let us now turn to the individual arts and to the manner in which they were evaluated and grouped by the ancients. Poetry was always most highly respected, and the notion that the poet is inspired by the Muses goes back to Homer and Hesiod. The Latin term (*vates*) also suggests an old link between poetry and religious prophecy, and Plato is hence drawing upon an early notion when in the *Phaedrus* he considers poetry one of the forms of divine madness. However, we should also remember that the same conception of poetry is expressed with a certain irony in the *Ion* and the *Apology*, and that even in the *Phaedrus* the divine madness of the poet is compared with that of the lover and of the religious prophet. There is no mention of the "fine arts" in this passage, and it was left to the late sophist Callistratus to transfer Plato's concept of inspiration to the art of sculpture.

Among all the "fine arts" it was certainly poetry about which Plato had most to say, especially in the *Republic*, but the treatment given to it is neither systematic nor friendly, but suspiciously similar to the one he gives to rhetoric in some of his other writings. Aristotle, on the other hand, dedicated a whole treatise to the theory of poetry and deals with it in a thoroughly systematic and constructive fashion. The *Poetics* not only contains a great number of specific ideas which exercised a lasting influence upon later criticism; it also established a permanent place for the theory of poetry in the philosophical encyclopaedia of knowledge. The mutual influence of poetry and eloquence had been a permanent

feature of ancient literature ever since the time of the Sophists, and the close relationship between these two branches of literature received a theoretical foundation through the proximity of the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* in the corpus of Aristotle's works. Moreover, since the order of the writings in the Aristotelian Corpus was interpreted as early as the commentators of late antiquity as a scheme of classification for the philosophical disciplines, the place of the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* after the logical writings of the *Organon* established a link between logic, rhetoric and poetics that was emphasized by some of the Arabic commentators, the effects of which were felt down to the Renaissance.

Music also held a high place in ancient thought; yet it should be remembered that the Greek term *μουσική*, which is derived from the Muses, originally comprised much more than we understand by music. Musical education, as we can still see in Plato's *Republic*, included not only music, but also poetry and the dance. Plato and Aristotle, who also employ the term music in the more specific sense familiar to us, do not treat music or the dance as separate arts but rather as elements of certain types of poetry, especially of lyric and dramatic poetry. There is reason to believe that they were thus clinging to an older tradition which was actually disappearing in their own time through the emancipation of instrumental music from poetry. On the other hand, the Pythagorean discovery of the numerical proportions underlying the musical intervals led to a theoretical treatment of music on a mathematical basis, and consequently musical theory entered into an alliance with the mathematical sciences which is already apparent in Plato's *Republic*, and was to last far down into early modern times.

When we consider the visual arts of painting, sculpture and architecture, it appears that their social and intellectual prestige in antiquity was much lower than one might expect from their actual achievements or from occasional enthusiastic remarks which date for the most part from the later centuries. It is true that painting was compared to poetry by Simonides and Plato, by Aristotle and Horace, as it was compared to rhetoric by Cicero, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and other writers. It is also true that architecture was included among the liberal arts by Varro and Vitruvius, and painting by Pliny and Galen, that

Dio Chrysostom compared the art of the sculptor with that of the poet, and that Philostratus and Callistratus wrote enthusiastically about painting and sculpture. Yet the place of painting among the liberal arts was explicitly denied by Seneca and ignored by most other writers, and the statement of Lucian that everybody admires the works of the great sculptors but would not want to be a sculptor oneself, seems to reflect the prevalent view among writers and thinkers. The term *δημιουργός*, commonly applied to painters and sculptors, reflects their low social standing, which was related to the ancient contempt for manual work. When Plato compares the description of his ideal state to a painting and even calls his world-shaping god a demiurge, he no more enhances the importance of the artist than does Aristotle when he uses the statue as the standard example for a product of human art. When Cicero, probably reflecting Panaetius, speaks of the ideal notions in the mind of the sculptor, and when the Middle Platonists and Plotinus compare the ideas in the mind of God with the concepts of the visual artist they go one step further. Yet no ancient philosopher, as far as I know, wrote a separate systematic treatise on the visual arts or assigned to them a prominent place in his scheme of knowledge.

If we want to find in classical philosophy a link between poetry, music and the fine arts, it is provided primarily by the concept of imitation (*μίμησις*). Passages have been collected from the writings of Plato and Aristotle from which it appears quite clearly that they considered poetry, music, the dance, painting and sculpture as different forms of imitation. This fact is significant so far as it goes, and it has influenced many later authors, even in the eighteenth century. But aside from the fact that none of the passages has a systematic character or even enumerates all of the “fine arts” together, it should be noted that the scheme excludes architecture, that music and the dance are treated as parts of poetry and not as separate arts, and that on the other hand the individual branches or subdivisions of poetry and of music seem to be put on a par with painting or sculpture. Finally, imitation is anything but a laudatory category, at least for Plato, and wherever Plato and Aristotle treat the “imitative arts” as a distinct group within the larger class of “arts,” this group seems to include, besides the “fine

arts” in which we are interested, other activities that are less “fine,” such as sophistry, or the use of the mirror, of magic tricks, or the imitation of animal voices. Moreover, Aristotle’s distinction between the arts of necessity and the arts of pleasure is quite incidental and does not identify the arts of pleasure with the “fine” or even the imitative arts, and when it is emphasized that he includes music and drawing in his scheme of education in the *Politics*, it should be added that they share this place with grammar (writing) and arithmetic.

The final ancient attempts at a classification of the more important human arts and sciences were made after the time of Plato and Aristotle. They were due partly to the endeavors of rival schools of philosophy and rhetoric to organize secondary or preparatory education into a system of elementary disciplines (*τὰ ἐγκύκλια*). This system of the co-called “liberal arts” was subject to a number of changes and fluctuations, and its development is not known in all of its earlier phases. Cicero often speaks of the liberal arts and of their mutual connection, though he does not give a precise list of these arts, but we may be sure that he did not think of the “fine arts” as was so often believed in modern times. The definitive scheme of the seven liberal arts is found only in Martianus Capella: grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Other schemes which are similar but not quite identical are found in many Greek and Latin authors before Capella. Very close to Capella’s scheme and probably its source was that of Varro, which included medicine and architecture in addition to Capella’s seven arts. Quite similar also is the scheme underlying the work of Sextus Empiricus. It contains only six arts, omitting logic, which is treated as one of the three parts of philosophy. The Greek author, Sextus, was conscious of the difference between the preliminary disciplines and the parts of philosophy, whereas the Latin authors who had no native tradition of philosophical instruction were ready to disregard that distinction. If we compare Capella’s scheme of the seven liberal arts with the modern system of the “fine arts,” the differences are obvious. Of the fine arts only music, understood as musical theory, appears among the liberal arts. Poetry is not listed among them, yet we know from other sources that it was closely linked with grammar

and rhetoric. The visual arts have no place in the scheme, except for occasional attempts at inserting them, of which we have spoken above. On the other hand, the liberal arts include grammar and logic, mathematics and astronomy, that is, disciplines we should classify as sciences.

The same picture is gained from the distribution of the arts among the nine Muses. It should be noted that the number of the Muses was not fixed before a comparatively late period, and that the attempt to assign particular arts to individual Muses is still later and not at all uniform. However, the arts listed in these late schemes are the various branches of poetry and of music, with eloquence, history, the dance, grammar, geometry, and astronomy. In other words, just as in the schemes of the liberal arts, so in the schemes for the Muses poetry and music are grouped with some of the sciences, whereas the visual arts are omitted. Antiquity knew no Muse of painting or of sculpture; they had to be invented by the allegorists of the early modern centuries. And the five fine arts which constitute the modern system were not grouped together in antiquity, but kept quite different company: poetry stays usually with grammar and rhetoric; music is as close to mathematics and astronomy as it is to the dance, and poetry; and the visual arts, excluded from the realm of the Muses and of the liberal arts by most authors, must be satisfied with the modest company of the other manual crafts.

Thus classical antiquity left no systems or elaborate concepts of an aesthetic nature, but merely a number of scattered notions and suggestions that exercised a lasting influence down to modern times but had to be carefully selected, taken out of their context, rearranged, reemphasized and reinterpreted or misinterpreted before they could be utilized as building materials for aesthetic systems. We have to admit the conclusion, distasteful to many historians of aesthetics but grudgingly admitted by most of them, that ancient writers and thinkers, though confronted with excellent works of art and quite susceptible to their charm, were neither able nor eager to detach the aesthetic quality of these works of art from their intellectual, moral, religious and practical function or content, or to use such an aesthetic quality as a standard for grouping the fine arts together or for making them the subject of a comprehensive philosophical interpretation.

III

The early Middle Ages inherited from late antiquity the scheme of the seven liberal arts that served not only for a comprehensive classification of human knowledge but also for the curriculum of the monastic and cathedral schools down to the twelfth century. The subdivision of the seven arts into the Trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic) and Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) seems to have been emphasized since Carolingian times. This classification became inadequate after the growth of learning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The classification schemes of the twelfth century reflect different attempts to combine the traditional system of the liberal arts with the threefold division of philosophy (logic, ethics and physics) known through Isidore, and with the divisions of knowledge made by Aristotle or based on the order of his writings, which then began to become known through Latin translations from the Greek and Arabic. The rise of the universities also established philosophy, medicine, jurisprudence and theology as new and distinct subjects outside the liberal arts, and the latter were again reduced from the status of an encyclopaedia of secular knowledge they had held in the earlier Middle Ages to that of preliminary disciplines they had held originally in late antiquity. On the other hand, Hugo of St. Victor was probably the first to formulate a scheme of seven mechanical arts corresponding to the seven liberal arts, and this scheme influenced many important authors of the subsequent period, such as Vincent of Beauvais and Thomas Aquinas. The seven mechanical arts, like the seven liberal arts earlier, also appeared in artistic representations, and they are worth listing: *lanificium*, *armatura*, *navigatio*, *agricultura*, *venatio*, *medicina*, *theatrica* [fabric making, armament, commerce, agriculture, hunting, medicine, theatrics]. Architecture as well as various branches of sculpture and of painting are listed, along with several other crafts, as subdivisions of *armatura*, and thus occupy a quite subordinate place even among the mechanical arts. Music appears in all these schemes in the company of the mathematical disciplines, whereas poetry, when mentioned, is closely linked to grammar, rhetoric and logic. The fine arts are not

grouped together or singled out in any of these schemes, but scattered among various sciences, crafts, and other human activities of a quite disparate nature. Different as are these schemes from each other in detail, they show a persistent general pattern and continued to influence later thought.

If we compare these theoretical systems with the reality of the same period, we find poetry and music among the subjects taught in many schools and universities, whereas the visual arts were confined to the artisans' guilds, in which the painters were sometimes associated with the druggists who prepared their paints, the sculptors with the goldsmiths, and the architects with the masons and carpenters. The treatises also that were written, on poetry and rhetoric, on music, and on some of the arts and crafts, the latter not too numerous, have all a strictly technical and professional character and show no tendency to link any of these arts with the others or with philosophy.

The very concept of "art" retained the same comprehensive meaning it had possessed in antiquity, and the same connotation that it was teachable. And the term *artista* coined in the Middle Ages indicated either the craftsman or the student of the liberal arts. Neither for Dante nor for Aquinas has the term Art the meaning we associate with it, and it has been emphasized or admitted that for Aquinas shoemaking, cooking and juggling, grammar and arithmetic are no less and in no other sense *artes* than painting and sculpture, poetry and music, which latter are never grouped together, not even as imitative arts.

On the other hand, the concept of beauty that is occasionally discussed by Aquinas and somewhat more emphatically by a few other medieval philosophers is not linked with the arts, fine or otherwise, but treated primarily as a metaphysical attribute of God and of his creation, starting from Augustine and from Dionysius the Areopagite. Among the transcendentals or most general attributes of being, *pulchrum* does not appear in thirteenth-century philosophy, although it is considered as a general concept and treated in close connection with *bonum*. The question whether Beauty is one of the transcendentals has become a subject of controversy among Neo-Thomists. This is an interesting sign of their varying attitude toward modern aesthetics, which some of them would like to incorporate in a

philosophical system based on Thomist principles. For Aquinas himself, or for other medieval philosophers, the question is meaningless, for even if they had posited *pulchrum* as a transcendental concept, which they did not, its meaning would have been different from the modern notion of artistic beauty in which the Neo-Thomists are interested. Thus it is obvious that there was artistic production as well as artistic appreciation in the Middle Ages, and this could not fail to find occasional expression in literature and philosophy. Yet there is no medieval concept or system of the Fine Arts, and if we want to keep speaking of medieval aesthetics, we must admit that its concept and subject matter are, for better or for worse, quite different from the modern philosophical discipline.

IV

The period of the Renaissance brought about many important changes in the social and cultural position of the various arts and thus prepared the ground for the later development of aesthetic theory. But, contrary to a widespread opinion, the Renaissance did not formulate a system of the fine arts or a comprehensive theory of aesthetics.

Early Italian humanism, which in many respects continued the grammatical and rhetorical traditions of the Middle Ages, not merely provided the old Trivium with a new and more ambitious name (*Studio humanitatis*) but also increased its actual scope, content and significance in the curriculum of the schools and universities and in its own extensive literary production. The *Studia humanitatis* excluded logic, but they added to the traditional grammar and rhetoric not only history, Greek and moral philosophy, but also made poetry, once a sequel of grammar and rhetoric, the most important member of the whole group. It is true that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries poetry was understood as the ability to write Latin verse and to interpret the ancient poets, and that the poetry which the humanists defended against some of their theological contemporaries or for which they were crowned by popes and emperors was a quite different thing from what we understand by that name. Yet the name poetry, meaning at first

Latin poetry, received much honor and glamor through the early humanists, and by the sixteenth century vernacular poetry and prose began to share in the prestige of Latin literature. It was the various branches of Latin and vernacular poetry and literature which constituted the main pursuit of the numerous "Academies" founded in Italy during that period and imitated later in the other European countries. The revival of Platonism also helped to spread the notion of the divine madness of the poet, a notion that by the second half of the sixteenth century began to be extended to the visual arts and became one of the ingredients of the modern concept of genius.

[...]

The rising social and cultural claims of the visual arts led in the sixteenth century in Italy to an important new development that occurred in the other European countries somewhat later: the three visual arts, painting, sculpture and architecture, were for the first time clearly separated from the crafts with which they had been associated in the preceding period. The term *Arti del disegno*, upon which "Beaux Arts" was probably based, was coined by Vasari, who used it as the guiding concept for his famous collection of biographies. And this change in theory found its institutional expression in 1563 when in Florence, again under the personal influence of Vasari, the painters, sculptors and architects cut their previous connections with the craftsmen's guilds and formed an Academy of Art (*Accademia del Disegno*), the first of its kind that served as a model for later similar institutions in Italy and other countries. The Art Academies followed the pattern of the literary Academies that had been in existence for some time, and they replaced the older workshop tradition with a regular kind of instruction that included such scientific subjects as geometry and anatomy.

The ambition of painting to share in the traditional prestige of literature also accounts for the popularity of a notion that appears prominently for the first time in the treatises on painting of the sixteenth century and was to retain its appeal down to the eighteenth: the parallel between painting and poetry. Its basis was the *Ut pictura poesis* of Horace, as well as the saying of Simonides reported by Plutarch, along with some other passages in Plato, Aristotle and Horace. The history of this notion from the sixteenth to the

eighteenth century has been carefully studied, and it has been justly pointed out that the use then made of the comparison exceeded anything done or intended by the ancients. Actually, the meaning of the comparison was reversed, since the ancients had compared poetry with painting when they were writing about poetry, whereas the modern authors more often compared painting with poetry while writing about painting. How seriously the comparison was taken we can see from the fact that Horace's *Ars poetica* was taken as a literary model for some treatises on painting and that many poetical theories and concepts were applied to painting by these authors in a more or less artificial manner. The persistent comparison between poetry and painting went a long way, as did the emancipation of the three visual arts from the crafts, to prepare the ground for the later system of the five fine arts, but it obviously does not yet presuppose or constitute such a system. Even the few treatises written in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century that dealt with both poetry and painting do not seem to have gone beyond more or less external comparisons into an analysis of common principles.

[...]

V

During the seventeenth century the cultural leadership of Europe passed from Italy to France, and many characteristic ideas and tendencies of the Italian Renaissance were continued and transformed by French classicism and the French Enlightenment before they became a part of later European thought and culture. Literary criticism and poetic theory, so prominent in the French classical period, seem to have taken little notice of the other fine arts. [...]

Yet the *Siècle de Louis XIV* was not limited in its achievements to poetry and literature. Painting and the other visual arts began to flourish, and with Poussin France produced a painter of European fame. Later in the century Lulli, although of Italian birth, developed a distinctive French style in music, and his great success with the Parisian public went a long way to win for his art the same popularity in France it had long possessed in Italy.

One of the great changes that occurred during the seventeenth century was the rise and emancipation of the natural sciences. By the second half of the century, after the work of Galileo and Descartes had been completed and the Académie des Sciences and the Royal Society had begun their activities, this development could not fail to impress the literati and the general public. It has been rightly observed that the famous *Querelle des Anciens et Modernes*, which stirred many scholars in France and also in England during the last quarter of the century, was due largely to the recent discoveries in the natural sciences. The Moderns, conscious of these achievements, definitely shook off the authority of classical antiquity that had weighed on the Renaissance no less than on the Middle Ages, and went a long way toward formulating the concept of human progress. Yet this is only one side of the *Querelle*.

The *Querelle* as it went on had two important consequences which have not been sufficiently appreciated. First, the Moderns broadened the literary controversy into a systematic comparison between the achievements of antiquity and of modern times in the various fields of human endeavor, thus developing a classification of knowledge and culture that was in many respects novel, or more specific than previous systems. Secondly, a point by point examination of the claims of the ancients and moderns in the various fields led to the insight that in certain fields, where everything depends on mathematical calculation and the accumulation of knowledge, the progress of the moderns over the ancients can be clearly demonstrated, whereas in certain other fields, which depend on individual talent and on the taste of the critic, the relative merits of the ancients and moderns cannot be so clearly established but may be subject to controversy.

Thus the ground is prepared for the first time for a clear distinction between the arts and the sciences, a distinction absent from ancient, medieval or Renaissance discussions of such subjects even though the same words were used. In other words, the separation between the arts and the sciences in the modern sense presupposes not only the actual progress of the sciences in the seventeenth century but also the reflection upon the reasons why some other human intellectual activities which we now call the Fine Arts did not or could not participate in the same kind of pro-

gress. To be sure, the writings of the *Querelle* do not yet attain a complete clarity on these points, and this fact in itself definitely confirms our contention that the separation between the arts and the sciences and the modern system of the fine arts were just in the making at that time. [. . .]

VI

[. . .]

The decisive step toward a system of the fine arts was taken by the Abbé Batteux in his famous and influential treatise, *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (1746). It is true that many elements of his system were derived from previous authors, but at the same time it should not be overlooked that he was the first to set forth a clearcut system of the fine arts in a treatise devoted exclusively to this subject. This alone may account for his claim to originality as well as for the enormous influence he exercised both in France and abroad, especially in Germany. Batteux codified the modern system of the fine arts almost in its final form, whereas all previous authors had merely prepared it. He started from the poetic theories of Aristotle and Horace, as he states in his preface, and tried to extend their principles from poetry and painting to the other arts. In his first chapter, Batteux gives a clear division of the arts. He separates the fine arts which have pleasure for their end from the mechanical arts, and lists the fine arts as follows: music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and the dance. He adds a third group which combines pleasure and usefulness and puts eloquence and architecture in this category. In the central part of his treatise, Batteux tries to show that the "imitation of beautiful nature" is the principle common to all the arts, and he concludes with a discussion of the theatre as a combination of all the other arts. The German critics of the later eighteenth century, and their recent historians, criticized Batteux for his theory of imitation and often failed to recognize that he formulated the system of the arts which they took for granted and for which they were merely trying to find different principles. They also overlooked the fact that the much maligned principle of imitation was the only one a classicist critic such as Batteux could use when he wanted to group the fine arts together with

even an appearance of ancient authority. For the "imitative" arts were the only authentic ancient precedent for the "fine arts," and the principle of imitation could be replaced only after the system of the latter had been so firmly established as no longer to need the ancient principle of imitation to link them together. [. . .]

VII

Having followed the French development through the eighteenth century, we must discuss the history of artistic thought in England. The English writers were strongly influenced by the French down to the end of the seventeenth century and later, but during the eighteenth century they made important contributions of their own and in turn influenced continental thought, especially in France and Germany. [. . .] Early in the eighteenth century, Jonathan Richardson was praising painting as a liberal art, and John Dennis in some of his critical treatises on poetics stressed the affinity between poetry, painting and music.

Of greater importance were the writings of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the most influential thinkers of the eighteenth century, not only in England but also on the continent. His interest and taste for literature and the arts are well known, and his writings are full of references to the various arts and to the beauty of their works. The ideal of the *virtuoso* which he embodied and advocated no longer included the sciences, as in the seventeenth century, but had its center in the arts and in the moral life. Since Shaftesbury was the first major philosopher in modern Europe in whose writings the discussion of the arts occupied a prominent place, there is some reason for considering him as the founder of modern aesthetics. Yet Shaftesbury was influenced primarily by Plato and Plotinus, as well as by Cicero, and he consequently did not make a clear distinction between artistic and moral beauty. His moral sense still includes both ethical and aesthetic objects. [. . .]

The philosophical implications of Shaftesbury's doctrine were further developed by a group of Scottish thinkers. Francis Hutcheson, who considered himself Shaftesbury's pupil, modified his doctrine by distinguishing between the moral sense and the sense of beauty. This

distinction, which was adopted by Hume and quoted by Diderot, went a long ways to prepare the separation of ethics and aesthetics, although Hutcheson still assigned the taste of poetry to the moral sense. A later philosopher of the Scottish school, Thomas Reid, introduced common sense as a direct criterion of truth, and although he was no doubt influenced by Aristotle's notion of common sense and the Stoic and modern views on "common notions," it has been suggested that his common sense was conceived as a counterpart of Hutcheson's two senses. Thus the psychology of the Scottish school led the way for the doctrine of the three faculties of the soul, which found its final development in Kant and its application in Cousin. [. . .]

VIII

Discussion of the arts does not seem to have occupied many German writers of the seventeenth century, which was on the whole a period of decline. The poet Opitz showed familiarity with the parallel of poetry and painting, but otherwise the Germans did not take part in the development we are trying to describe before the eighteenth century. During the first part of that century interest in literature and literary criticism began to rise, but did not yet lead to a detailed or comparative treatment of the other arts. [. . .]

These critical discussions among poets and literati constitute the general background for the important work of the philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten and of his pupil Georg Friedrich Meier. Baumgarten is famous for having coined the term aesthetics, but opinions differ as to whether he must be considered the founder of that discipline or what place he occupies in its history and development. The original meaning of the term aesthetics as coined by Baumgarten, which has been well nigh forgotten by now, is the theory of sensuous knowledge, as a counterpart to logic as a theory of intellectual knowledge. The definitions Baumgarten gives of aesthetics show that he is concerned with the arts and with beauty as one of their main attributes, but he still uses the old term liberal arts, and he considers them as forms of knowledge. The question whether Baumgarten really gave a theory of all the fine arts, or merely a poetics and rhetoric with a new

name, has been debated but can be answered easily. In his earlier work, in which he first coined the term aesthetic, Baumgarten was exclusively concerned with poetics and rhetoric. In his later, unfinished work, to which he gave the title *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten states in his introduction that he intends to give a theory of all the arts, and actually makes occasional references to the visual arts and to music. This impression is confirmed by the text of Baumgarten's lectures published only recently, and by the writings of his pupil Meier. On the other hand, it is quite obvious, and was noted by contemporary critics, that Baumgarten and Meier develop their actual theories only in terms of poetry and eloquence and take nearly all their examples from literature. Baumgarten is the founder of aesthetics in so far as he first conceived a general theory of the arts as a separate philosophical discipline with a distinctive and well-defined place in the system of philosophy. He failed to develop his doctrine with reference to the arts other than poetry and eloquence, or even to propose a systematic list and division of these other arts. In this latter respect, he was preceded and surpassed by the French writers, especially by Batteux and the Encyclopaedists, whereas the latter failed to develop a theory of the arts as part of a philosophical system. It was the result of German thought and criticism during the second half of the eighteenth century that the more concrete French conception of the fine arts was utilized in a philosophical theory of aesthetics for which Baumgarten had formulated the general scope and program. [. . .]

The broadening scope of German aesthetics after Baumgarten, which we must now try to trace, was due not only to the influence of Batteux, of the Encyclopaedists, and of other French and English writers but also to the increasing interest taken by writers, philosophers, and the lay public in the visual arts and in music. Winckelmann's studies of classical art are important for the history of our problem for the enthusiasm which he stimulated among his German readers for ancient sculpture and architecture, but not for any opinion he may have expressed on the relation between the visual arts and literature. Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766), too, has a notable importance, not only for its particular theories on matters of poetry and of the visual arts, but also for the very attention given to the latter by one

of the most brilliant and most respected German writers of the time. Yet the place of the *Laokoon* in the history of our problem has been misjudged. To say that the *Laokoon* put an end to the age-old tradition of the parallel between painting and poetry that had its ultimate roots in classical antiquity and found its greatest development in the writers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth century, and thus freed poetry from the emphasis on description, is to give only one side of the picture. It is to forget that the parallel between painting and poetry was one of the most important elements that preceded the formation of the modern system of the fine arts, though it had lost this function as a link between two different arts by the time of Lessing, when the more comprehensive system of the fine arts had been firmly established. In so far as Lessing paid no attention to the broader system of the fine arts, especially to music, his *Laokoon* constituted a detour or a dead end in terms of the development leading to a comprehensive system of the fine arts. It is significant that the *Laokoon* was criticized for this very reason by two prominent contemporary critics, and that Lessing in the posthumous notes for the second part of the work gave some consideration to this criticism, though we have no evidence that he actually planned to extend his analysis to music and to a coherent system of the arts.

The greatest contributions to the history of our problem in the interval between Baumgarten and Kant came from Mendelssohn, Sulzer, and Herder. Mendelssohn, who was well acquainted with French and English writings on the subject, demanded in a famous article that the fine arts (painting, sculpture, music, the dance, and architecture) and belles lettres (poetry and eloquence) should be reduced to some common principle better than imitation, and thus was the first among the Germans to formulate a system of the fine arts. Shortly afterwards, in a book review, he criticized Baumgarten and Meier for not having carried out the program of their new science, aesthetics. They wrote as if they had been thinking exclusively in terms of poetry and literature, whereas aesthetic principles should be formulated in such a way as to apply to the visual arts and to music as well. In his annotations to Lessing's *Laokoon*, published long after his death, Mendelssohn persistently criticizes Lessing for

not giving any consideration to music and to the system of the arts as a whole; we have seen how Lessing, in the fragmentary notes for a continuation of the *Laokoon*, tried to meet this criticism; Mendelssohn also formulated a doctrine of the three faculties of the soul corresponding to the three basic realms of goodness, truth and beauty, thus continuing the work of the Scottish philosophers. He did not work out an explicit theory of aesthetics, but under the impact of French and English authors he indicated the direction in which German aesthetics was to develop from Baumgarten to Kant.

What Mendelssohn had merely set forth in a general outline and program, the Swiss thinker Sulzer, who was well versed in French literature but spent the greater part of his life in Northern Germany, was able to develop in a more systematic and elaborate fashion. Sulzer began his literary activity with a few short philosophical articles in which his interest for aesthetics was already apparent, and in which he also leaned toward the conception of an aesthetic faculty of the soul separate from the intellectual and moral faculties, a conception in whose development Mendelssohn and the philosopher Tetens also took their part. Some years later, Sulzer was prompted by the example of Lacombe's little dictionary of the fine arts to compile a similar dictionary in German on a much larger scale. This *General Theory of the Fine Arts*, which appeared in several editions, has been disparaged on account of its pedantic arrangement, but it is clear, comprehensive and learned, and had a considerable importance in its time. The work covers all the fine arts, not only poetry and eloquence, but also music and the visual arts, and thus represents the first attempt to carry out on a large scale the program formulated by Baumgarten and Mendelssohn. Thanks to its wide diffusion, Sulzer's work went a long way to acquaint the German public with the idea that all the fine arts are related and connected with each other. Sulzer's influence extended also to France, for when the great *Encyclopédie* was published in Switzerland in a second edition, many additions were based on his *General Theory*, including the article on aesthetics and the section on the Fine Arts.

In the decades after 1760, the interest in the new field of aesthetics spread rapidly in Germany. Courses on aesthetics were offered at a number

of universities after the example set by Baumgarten and Meier, and new tracts and textbooks, partly based on these courses, appeared almost every year.

[. . .]

I should like to conclude this survey with Kant, since he was the first major philosopher who included aesthetics and the philosophical theory of the arts as an integral part of his system. Kant's interest in aesthetic problems appears already in his early writing on the beautiful and sublime, which was influenced in its general conception by Burke. He also had occasion to discuss aesthetic problems in several of his courses. Notes based on these courses extant in manuscript have not been published, but have been utilized by a student of Kant's aesthetics. It appears that Kant cited in these lectures many authors he does not mention in his published works, and that he was thoroughly familiar with most of the French, English and German writers on aesthetics. At the time when he published the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he still used the term aesthetics in a sense different from the common one, and explains in an interesting footnote, that he does not follow Baumgarten's terminology since he does not believe in the possibility of a philosophical theory of the arts. In the following years, however, he changed his view, and in his *Critique of Judgment*, which constitutes the third and concluding part of his philosophical system, the larger of its two major divisions is dedicated to aesthetics, whereas the other section deals with teleology. The system of the three *Critiques* as presented in this last volume is based on a threefold division of the faculties of the mind, which adds the faculty of judgment, aesthetic and teleological, to pure and practical reason. Aesthetics, as the philosophical theory of beauty and the arts, acquires equal standing with the theory of truth (metaphysics or epistemology) and the theory of goodness (ethics).

In the tradition of systematic philosophy this was an important innovation, for neither Descartes nor Spinoza nor Leibniz nor any of their ancient or medieval predecessors had found a separate or independent place in their system for the theory of the arts and of beauty, though they had expressed occasional opinions on these subjects. If Kant took this decisive step after some hesitation, he was obviously influenced by the

example of Baumgarten and by the rich French, English, and German literature on the arts his century had produced, with which he was well acquainted. In his critique of aesthetic judgment, Kant discusses also the concepts of the sublime and of natural beauty, but his major emphasis is on beauty in the arts, and he discusses many concepts and principles common to all the arts. In section 51 he also gives a division of the fine arts: speaking arts (poetry, eloquence); plastic arts (sculpture, architecture, painting, and gardening); arts of the beautiful play of sentiments (music, and the art of color). This scheme contains a few ephemeral details that were not retained by Kant's successors. However, since Kant aesthetics has occupied a permanent place among the major philosophical disciplines, and the core of the system of the fine arts fixed in the eighteenth century has been generally accepted as a matter of course by most later writers on the subject, except for variations of detail or of explanation.

IX

We shall not attempt to discuss the later history of our problem after Kant, but shall rather draw a few general conclusions from the development so far as we have been able to follow it. The grouping together of the visual arts with poetry and music into the system of the fine arts with which we are familiar did not exist in classical antiquity, in the Middle Ages or in the Renaissance. However, the ancients contributed to the modern system the comparison between poetry and painting and the theory of imitation that established a kind of link between painting and sculpture, poetry and music. The Renaissance brought about the emancipation of the three major visual arts from the crafts, it multiplied the comparisons between the various arts, especially between painting and poetry, and it laid the ground for an amateur interest in the different arts that tended to bring them together from the point of view of the reader, spectator and listener rather than of the artist. The seventeenth century witnessed the emancipation of the natural sciences and thus prepared the way for a clearer separation between the arts and the sciences.

Only the early eighteenth century, especially in England and France, produced elaborate treatises written by and for amateurs in which the various fine arts were grouped together, compared with each other and combined in a systematic scheme based on common principles. The second half of the century, especially in Germany, took the additional step of incorporating the comparative and theoretical treatment of the fine arts as a separate discipline into the system of philosophy. The modern system of the fine arts is thus pre-romantic in its origin, although all romantic as well as later aesthetics takes this system as its necessary basis.

It is not easy to indicate the causes for the genesis of the system in the eighteenth century. The rise of painting and of music since the Renaissance, not so much in their actual achievements as in their prestige and appeal, the rise of literary and art criticism, and above all the rise of an amateur public to which art collections and exhibitions, concerts as well as opera and theatre performances were addressed, must be considered as important factors. The fact that the affinity between the various fine arts is more plausible to the amateur, who feels a comparable kind of enjoyment, than to the artist himself, who is concerned with the peculiar aims and techniques of his art, is obvious in itself and is confirmed by Goethe's reaction. The origin of modern aesthetics in amateur criticism would go a long way to explain why works of art have until recently been analyzed by aestheticians from the point of view of the spectator, reader and listener rather than of the producing artist.

The development we have been trying to understand also provides an interesting object lesson for the historian of philosophy and of ideas in general. We are accustomed to the process by which notions first formulated by great and influential thinkers are gradually diffused among secondary writers and finally become the common property of the general public. Such seems to have been the development of aesthetics from Kant to the present. Its history before Kant is of a very different kind. The basic questions and conceptions underlying modern aesthetics seem to have originated quite apart from the traditions of systematic philosophy or from the writings of important original authors. They had their incon-

spicuous beginnings in secondary authors, now almost forgotten though influential in their own time, and perhaps in the discussion and conversations of educated laymen reflected in their writings. These notions had a tendency to fluctuate and to grow slowly, but only after they had crystallized into a pattern that seemed generally plausible did they find acceptance among the greater authors and the systematic philosophers. Baumgarten's aesthetics was but a program, and Kant's aesthetics the philosophical elaboration of a body of ideas that had had almost a century of informal and non-philosophical growth. If the absence of the scheme of the fine arts before the eighteenth century and its fluctuations in that century have escaped the attention of most historians, this merely proves how thoroughly and irresistibly plausible the scheme has become to modern thinkers and writers.

Another observation seems to impose itself as a result of our study. The various arts are certainly as old as human civilization, but the manner in which we are accustomed to group them and to assign them a place in our scheme of life and of culture is comparatively recent. This fact is not as strange as may appear on the surface. In the course of history, the various arts change not only their content and style, but also their relations to each other, and their place in the general system of culture, as do religion, philosophy or science. Our familiar system of the five fine arts did not merely originate in the eighteenth century, but it also reflects the particular cultural and social conditions of that time. If we consider other times and places, the status of the various arts, their associations and their subdivisions appear very different. There were important periods in cultural history when the novel, instrumental music, or canvas painting did not exist or have any importance. On the other hand, the sonnet and the epic poem, stained glass and mosaic, fresco painting and book illumination, vase painting and tapestry, bas relief and pottery have all been "major" arts at various times and in a way they no longer are now. Gardening has lost its standing as a fine art since the eighteenth century. On the other hand, the moving picture is a good example of how new techniques may lead to modes of artistic expression for which the aestheticians of the eighteenth and nineteenth

century had no place in their systems. The branches of the arts all have their rise and decline, and even their birth and death, and the distinction between "major" arts and their subdivisions is arbitrary and subject to change. There is hardly any ground but critical tradition or philosophical preference for deciding whether engraving is a separate art (as most of the eighteenth-century authors believed) or a subdivision of painting, or whether poetry and prose, dramatic and epic poetry, instrumental and vocal music are separate arts or subdivisions of one major art.

As a result of such changes, both in modern artistic production and in the study of other phases of cultural history, the traditional system of the fine arts begins to show signs of disintegration. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century, painting has moved further away from literature than at any previous time, whereas music has at times moved closer to it, and the crafts have taken great strides to recover their earlier standing as decorative arts. A greater awareness of the different techniques of the various arts has produced dissatisfaction among artists and critics with the conventions of an aesthetic system based on a situation no longer existing, an aesthetics that is trying in vain to hide the fact that its underlying system of the fine arts is hardly more than a postulate and that most of its theories are abstracted from particular arts, usually poetry, and more or less inapplicable to the others. The excesses of aestheticism have led to a healthy reaction which is yet far from universal. The tendency among some contemporary philosophers to consider Art and the aesthetic realm as a pervasive aspect of human experience rather than as the specific domain of the conventional fine arts also goes a long way to weaken the latter notion in its traditional form. All these ideas are still fluid and ill defined, and it is difficult to see how far they will go in modifying or undermining the traditional status of the fine arts and of aesthetics. In any case, these contemporary changes may help to open our eyes to an understanding of the historical origins and limitations of the modern system of the fine arts. Conversely, such historical understanding might help to free us from certain conventional preconceptions and to clarify our ideas on the present status and future prospects of the arts and of aesthetics.

The Ancient and Modern System of the Arts

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Paul Oskar Kristeller famously argued that the modern ‘system of the arts’ did not emerge until the mid-eighteenth century in the work of Charles Batteux. On this view, the modern conception of the fine arts had no parallel in the ancient world, the middle-ages or the modern period prior to Batteux. This paper argues that Kristeller was mistaken, because the ancient conception of the imitative arts completely overlaps with Batteux’s fine arts: poetry, painting, music, sculpture, and dance. Writers from the sixteenth century on adopted the ancient conception of the imitative arts and anticipated by 200 years the views of Batteux, who simply popularized the rubric ‘fine arts’.

1 The Orthodox View

Nowadays there is quite widespread agreement about what counts as the fine arts. Literature, music, painting, sculpture, and dance will show up on almost any list of the fine arts. Other arts (such as fencing and agriculture) are generally excluded from the list. Paul Oskar Kristeller famously argued that the membership in the ‘system’ (as he called it) of the fine arts was only established in the eighteenth century in the work of Charles Batteux.¹ In this essay, I will argue that Kristeller, and all those who have followed him, are wrong. The ancients had a category essentially indistinguishable from that adopted by Batteux

and subsequent thinkers. The only difference is that the ancients called arts in this category ‘imitative arts’ while Batteux called them ‘fine arts’. Writers from the sixteenth century on anticipated Batteux’s views. Batteux only popularized the rubric ‘fine arts’.

Kristeller, drawing upon an astounding breadth of knowledge, argued that ancient, medieval, and renaissance thinkers did not have a conception of the fine arts anything like the modern one. He noted that the ancients talked about τέχνη (*techné*) and *ars* but these concepts do not map neatly on to the fine arts as we understand them. All sorts of things that we would call crafts or sciences fall under the rubric of τέχνη or *ars*. Kristeller also argued that the ancient terms did not apply to paradigm cases of the fine arts. For example, neither Plato nor Aristotle states that architecture counts as an art. Kristeller held that medieval thinkers no more had our conception of

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the fine arts than did the ancients. Aquinas, for example, applied the term *artes* to shoemaking, cooking, juggling, grammar, and arithmetic as well as to painting, sculpture, poetry, and music.² In the renaissance, Kristeller observes, Castiglione did not clearly segregate the arts of poetry, painting, and music from the arts of fencing, horse riding, and numismatics.

Kristeller allows that Batteux did not create the modern system of the arts *ex nihilo*. The modern conception of the fine arts evolved over a period of time. In the sixteenth century, Giorgio Vasari's conception of the *arti del disegno* grouped together painting, sculpture, and architecture, distinguishing them from crafts. Kristeller regards this as a step towards the modern conception of the fine arts. He believes that Jacobus Pontanus took another step in his *Poeticarum Institutionum libri III* (1600). Going beyond the ancients, Pontanus grouped together painting, poetry, and music, but he omitted the other arts. According to Kristeller, even as late as 1719, Jean-Baptiste Dubos, in his influential *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music*, 'fails to give anywhere a precise list of the arts other than poetry and painting or to separate them consistently from other fields of professions'.³

All of this changed, Kristeller believed, with Batteux. In Batteux, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, and dance are clearly identified as the fine arts and distinguished from the mechanical arts. (Poetry, Batteux makes clear, includes all of what we would call literature, including works of literature in prose.) The mechanical arts serve practical needs such as providing food and shelter. In contrast, 'pleasure is the goal of the other arts ... These are called the fine arts *par excellence*. They are music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and the art of gesture, or dance'.⁴ Batteux identified a third class of arts 'whose purpose is simultaneously to provide both utility and pleasure'.⁵ He placed architecture and eloquence in this category. In the wake of Batteux, the category of the fine arts quickly became established. The list of fine arts continues to be debated to this day. Gardening continues to have a tenuous claim to being a fine art. Photography and film have, of course, been added. Still, despite some variation, the general category of the fine arts has, ever since Batteux, been well established.

Kristeller's account of the origin of the modern conception of the arts is almost universally accepted orthodoxy. It is cited as an authority in standard reference works on the history of aesthetics.⁶ It is widely anthologized.⁷ It is adopted by Larry Shiner in his book *The Invention of Art*.⁸ Recently, however, it has come in for criticism by James I. Porter.⁹ In essence, Porter presents two objections to the received view. The first is that the view presented by Batteux was anticipated in the ancient world. The other is that Batteux did not succeed in establishing a consensus about what constitute the fine arts and there was no system of the fine arts in the eighteenth century.

Porter performed a useful service in re-opening the debate initiated by Kristeller, but he did not succeed in overturning the established view. Consider his second objection. He holds that the membership of the class of the fine arts was not firmly established in the eighteenth century. This is true, but it has not been conclusively established ever since. Still, the fact of the matter is that, in the eighteenth century there was widespread agreement about membership in the fine arts. As Peter Kivy has convincingly argued, that is good enough from the perspective of Kristeller's hypothesis.¹⁰ So long as poetry (that is, literature), painting, sculpture, music (and perhaps a few others such as dance and architecture) are clearly regarded as a class and distinguished from other (non-fine) arts such as agriculture and fencing, the category (or system) of the fine arts has been established.

The other question is whether something like the eighteenth century conception of the fine arts existed at an earlier period; in particular, whether it existed in antiquity. I do not believe that Porter makes a convincing case for this conclusion. The conclusion that the ancients had a conception similar to Batteux's conception of the fine arts requires a closer reading of the ancient sources than Porter provides and I will endeavour to provide it.

A third theme runs through Porter's article, a theme that I will for the most part ignore. Porter criticizes the view, which he attributes to Kristeller, that the development of the category of the fine arts was associated with the introduction of an autonomous aesthetic realm. Porter argues against the view by noting (correctly) that Batteux did not separate the realm of arts from the realm

of morality and utility. That is, according to Batteux, art is a source of moral knowledge. (This view has remained widespread to the present day, but it is not accepted by, for example, formalists.) I ignore this aspect of Porter's argument because it introduces a different question. There is a question about whether people before Batteux had a category essentially indistinguishable from Batteux's category of the fine arts. There is another question about what people took to be the essence of arts in the category of the fine or (as the ancients called them) imitative arts. The first question is the only one that is of concern in this essay. People can agree on the answer to the first question but differ on the answer given to the second.

Although I take issue with Kristeller's central thesis, I am playing Kristeller's game and by Kristeller's rules. Kristeller simply aimed to identify the list of arts that are categorized as fine arts and to identify the time at which they became fine arts. It was not an essential part of Kristeller's project to identify what all of the fine arts have in common and makes them the fine arts. Similarly, I will say little about the questions of what makes the fine arts fine (what they have in common) and the related question of what makes them valuable (qua works of art). I have two reasons for avoiding these questions, ones that may be thought to be more interesting than the one I address. The first is that, historically, people who agree about the list of the fine arts often disagree about what these arts have in common and why they are valuable. From antiquity to the eighteenth century there was widespread agreement that the fine arts are imitative arts. Nevertheless, there was disagreement about why being imitative made an art a fine art. Some writers thought that the (imitative) fine arts are sources of pleasure. Others thought that the fine arts are sources of knowledge. Others thought that art is a source of both pleasure and knowledge. Others stressed the importance of imagination. This disagreement has persisted to the present day.

This brings me to my second reason for neglecting certain questions. Today there is widespread, though not universal, agreement that there is no common feature of the fine arts. Using terminology introduced by Stephen Davies, we can say that procedural rather than functional definitions of art now predominate.¹¹ According

to procedural definitions of art, the search for a common function that all artworks perform, that makes them valuable qua artworks, was misguided. Instead, the common feature of artworks is the process by which they are recognized as artworks or endowed with arthood. Procedural definitions of art are now predominant, and I accept that there is no common function performed by all works recognized as works of (fine) art. The exploration of the process by which certain works came to be regarded as works of (fine) art and certain arts as fine arts would be interesting, but this exploration is beyond the scope of the present essay.

2 The Ancient System of the Arts

In one respect, Porter is completely right. He notes that Batteux, for all the originality attributed to him by Kristeller and others, would have been very surprised to find that he had originated the system of the fine arts. He saw himself as re-articulating a view that the ancients had held. Aristotle and Horace were huge influences on him. In *Les Beaux Arts*, Batteux writes that his 'position is not novel. It was ubiquitous in the ancient world. Aristotle began the *Poetics* by stating the principle that music, dance, poetry, and painting are imitative arts'.¹²

Batteux then goes on to cite Plato in support of his position. Let us examine in some detail the evidence for the view, adopted by Batteux, that the system of the fine arts was anticipated by ancient writers.

The influence of Aristotle is everywhere manifest in Batteux. It seems very likely that his initial distinction between the mechanical arts and the fine arts originated in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. There we find the distinction between arts relating to 'necessities' and arts relating to 'the pastimes of life'.¹³ This is closely parallel to Batteux's distinction between the mechanical arts and the arts whose goal is pleasure. Batteux regards the latter as the fine arts and, Ross, in his classic commentary on the *Metaphysics*, glosses Aristotle's second category as 'almost fine arts'.¹⁴

Batteux was influenced by a passage in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where he refers to 'painting, poetry, [and] sculpture' as sources of imitations.¹⁵ This passage anticipates Batteux in two ways.

For a start, the common factor linking painting, poetry, and sculpture, on Aristotle's view, is that they imitate. Batteux similarly held that imitation is the essence (or 'single principle') of the arts. As well, Aristotle's list in the *Rhetoric* includes three-fifths of Batteux's list of fine arts: 'music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and the art of gesture, or dance'.¹⁶ The overlap between the two lists is expanded when we recall that, in the *Poetics*, Aristotle writes: 'Epic poetry ... and the poetry of tragic drama, and, moreover, comedy and dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and harp-playing, these, speaking generally, may all be said to be "representations of life"'.¹⁷ In the same section of the *Poetics*, Aristotle writes that: 'Rhythm alone without tune is employed by dancers in their representations, for by means of rhythmical gestures they represent both character and experiences and actions'.¹⁸ That is, Aristotle seems to group music and dance together with poetry, painting, and sculpture. This is Batteux's full list of fine arts. All of a sudden, Batteux seems less strikingly original than Kristeller would have us believe.

Let us now consider whether Plato had a conception of the arts anything like Batteux's. Plato does not write systematically about the arts, so it is a little difficult to be certain. Still, there is a good deal of evidence that, like Aristotle, he had a conception of the imitative arts, a conception more or less co-extensive with Batteux's fine arts. As is well known, Book 10 of the *Republic* identifies poetry and painting as imitative arts. In that context, Plato does not mention music, dance, or sculpture. However, in other contexts he does seem to classify all of these as imitative arts.

Let us begin by considering music. *Cratylus* is a discussion of the nature of names. At one point, the question of whether names are imitations arises and, if so, of what kind. Socrates then states that

in the first place we shall not, in my opinion, be making names, if we imitate things as we do in music, although musical imitation also is vocal; and secondly we shall make no names by imitating that which music imitates. What I mean is this: all objects have sound and shape, and many have color, have they not?¹⁹

Pretty clearly Plato is saying that music imitates. If music is an art, it follows that it is an imitative

art. Plato also discusses music in the *Laws*. There Plato considers and rejects the suggestion that music is valuable as a source of knowledge. He then writes that 'choric performances are representations of character, exhibited in actions and circumstances of every kind, in which, the several performers enact their parts by habit and imitative art'.²⁰ In a passage on musical education, Plato writes that

singers of hymns to Dionysus ought to be exceptionally keen of perception regarding rhythms and harmonic compositions, in order that when dealing with musical representations of a good kind or a bad, by which the soul is emotionally affected, they may be able to pick out the reproductions of the good kind and of the bad, and having rejected the latter, may produce the other in public, and charm the souls of the children by singing them, and so challenge them all to accompany them in acquiring virtue by means of these representations.²¹

These and similar passages leave little doubt that Plato regarded music as an imitative art.

I will quote one more passage from the *Laws* since it provides evidence that dance belongs on Plato's list of the imitative arts.

ATHENIAN: Well, then, do we still put our trust in those former statements of ours, in which we said that matters of rhythm and music generally are imitations of the manners of good or bad men? Or how do we stand?

CLINIAS: Our view at least remains unaltered.

ATHENIAN: We assert, then, that every means must be employed, not only to prevent our children from desiring to copy different models in dancing or singing, but also to prevent anyone from tempting them by the inducement of pleasures of all sorts.²²

This passage suggests that when Plato speaks of 'rhythm and music' as good imitations of the manners of men, he is speaking of dance and music. Otherwise it is difficult to explain why, in his second speech, the Athenian makes reference to both dancing and singing.

In the *Sophist*, sculpture is grouped together with painting as a form of imitation.²³ In *Hippias*

Major (a work of somewhat doubtful provenance), sculpture is described as an art, though not specifically as an imitative art.²⁴ The *Gorgias* is concerned with the nature of rhetoric. Plato argues that rhetoric is not an art (*techné*). (It is merely a 'knack'.)²⁵ Sculpture and painting are, however, grouped together and classified as arts. εἰκῶν, one of the Greek words for statue, literally means likeness or image. This is more evidence that sculpture was regarded as an imitative art in Greece.

Perhaps the clearest statement of a conception of imitative arts is found in *Epinomis*. The authorship of this dialogue is disputed. Some ancients attributed it to Philip of Opus and many modern authors consider it among Plato's apocrypha. For present purposes this does not matter. Whoever wrote this dialogue, it provides evidence of a conception of imitative arts in the ancient world. It also provides evidence that this class is co-extensive with Batteux's fine arts. This is the relevant passage:

And now that we see that the acquisition of necessities is achieved by means of art, but that no such art makes any man wise, there may be some diversion remaining after this—imitative for the most part, but in no way serious. For they imitate with many instruments, and with many imitative acts, not altogether seemly, of their very bodies, in performances both of speech and of every Muse, and in those whereof painting is mother, and whereby many and most various designs are elaborated in many sorts, moist and dry; and though a man ply his craft in these with the greatest zeal, in nothing is he rendered wise by imitation.²⁶

Here we find typical Platonic antipathy to the imitative arts. More importantly, we find poetry, music, painting (which imitates with moist media), and sculpture (which imitates with dry media) grouped together. The reference to imitation by means of bodies may even be construed to include dance. We then have the full set of canonical imitative arts. No other imitative arts are mentioned and the imitative arts are clearly distinguished from those that provide for life's necessities.

I conclude that Plato likely had a conception of imitative arts that corresponds to Batteux's fine arts: poetry, music, painting, sculpture, and

dance. In all probability, Aristotle took his list of the five imitative arts directly from Plato.

An advocate of Kristeller's position will be unconvinced by this argument. Aristotle and Plato may have lumped together poetry, painting, sculpture, music, and dance, but they regarded them as only some of the arts. So, one might conclude, the ancients lacked the modern conception of the fine arts. In response to this reply, one could say that the ancients had a conception of a subset of the arts, namely the imitative arts, which corresponded to Batteux's fine arts. Kristeller has a response to this response. He writes that

wherever Plato and Aristotle treat the 'imitative arts' as a distinct group within the larger class of 'arts,' this group seems to include, besides the 'fine arts' in which we are interested, other activities that are less 'fine,' such as sophistry, or the use of the mirror, of magic tricks, or the imitation of animal voices.²⁷

Kristeller defends this judgement by reference to Plato's *Sophist* 234E-235A, *Republic* 596D f. and 602D, and *Cratylus* 423C. He also refers us to *Poetics* 1447A.

Let us deal first with the passages from Plato. *Cratylus* 423C does not support Kristeller's judgement. As we have noted, *Cratylus* is concerned with the question of whether language is a system of conventional or natural signs. The point being made in 423C is that 'people who imitate sheep and cocks and other animals' are not naming the animals they imitate. There is absolutely no suggestion that making animal noises is an art, let alone one akin to painting and so on. It is also hard to see how *Republic* 596D supports Kristeller's case. The context is the discussion of painters and how they are not a source of knowledge. Plato wants to show that the painter, in representing material objects, imitates (or represents) imitations of the forms. The reference to mirrors is made simply to belittle the painter's accomplishments. Plato is not suggesting that the use of mirrors is an art akin to painting or the others. Similarly, in 602D, Plato downplays painters' achievements, likening them to magic tricks (or, in a better translation, witchcraft). He does not say that witchcraft is an art nor does he group it with the imitative arts.

Finally, there is the passage from the *Sophist*. This dialogue is concerned with identifying the characteristics of sophists and distinguishing them from philosophers. Sophistry is an art. The sophist is said to be 'a kind of a juggler, an imitator of realities'.²⁸ This initially seems to support Kristeller's position: sophistry is an art and it imitates reality. However, if we read on, it becomes clear that the *Sophist* is even less supportive of Kristeller's position than the other dialogues. Plato suggests that sophistry is an 'image-making art'. However, he then immediately distinguishes two sorts of image-making arts. 'Likeness-making' (εἰδωλοποιικός), such as painting or sculpture, is distinguished from a 'fantastic art' (φανταστικήν) that produces illusions. Plato places sophistry into this latter class. He is very clear: sophistry is quite unlike painting and sculpture. Painting, sculpture and the other imitative arts imitate something actual while sophistry merely creates illusions. That is, there is an original object of which imitative arts give a likeness or representation. (Of course, we know that Plato thinks that this likeness is not very good.) Sophistry, in contrast, has no original object. It makes things up whole cloth, as it were. This is an important distinction and explains why sophistry does not show up in contexts where Plato discusses poetry, painting, and the other imitative arts.

I imagine that it has been a while since someone checked Kristeller's footnotes, but the passages he cites do not say what he says that they say.

So let us turn back to Aristotle. Kristeller claims Aristotle runs together poetry, painting, music, sculpture, and dance with other imitative arts and defends this claim by reference to *Poetics* 1447A. I have already quoted from this passage, but let us look at the entire section:

Epic poetry, then, and the poetry of tragic drama, and, moreover, comedy and dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and harp-playing, these, speaking generally, may all be said to be 'representations of life.' But they differ one from another in three ways: either in using means generically different or in representing different objects or in representing objects not in the same way but in a different manner. For just as by the use both of color and form people represent many objects, making likenesses of them—some having a knowledge of art and some working

empirically—and just as others use the human voice; so is it also in the arts which we have mentioned, they all make their representations in rhythm and language and tune, using these means either separately or in combination. For tune and rhythm alone are employed in flute-playing and harp-playing and in any other arts which have a similar function, as, for example, pipe-playing. Rhythm alone without tune is employed by dancers in their representations, for by means of rhythmical gestures they represent both character and experiences and actions.

It is very hard to see how this passage supports Kristeller's position. The only imitative arts Aristotle mentions are the ones that belong to Batteux's category of the fine arts.

Another passage from Aristotle has been quoted both in support of Kristeller's hypothesis and against it. This is another passage that we have already had occasion to cite, *Rhetoric* 1371B. Porter writes:

Sculpture, the fifth item on Batteux's list, does not appear in the opening sections of the *Poetics* or in any other section of that treatise, but it does appear elsewhere, for example in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: 'painting, sculpture, poetry – and every product of skilful imitation'.²⁹

Kivy, writing in support of Kristeller and against Porter, seizes on this passage, saying that the addition of 'and every product of skilful imitation' is an implicit admission that there are other imitative arts besides those that eventually ended up on Batteux's list of fine arts.³⁰ Kivy concludes, as did Kristeller, that Aristotle believes that there are imitative arts that are not fine arts and, consequently, that his conception of the imitative arts does not anticipate Batteux's conception of fine arts.

Let us ask whether this passage in the *Rhetoric* supports Kristeller or whether it is evidence that Aristotle and Batteux had similar conceptions. Let us begin with the full passage from which Porter quotes, in the translation he uses. The precise meaning of the text is important here and I do not wish to appear to prejudge the issue by a selective choice of translation:

Since learning and wondering are pleasant, it follows that such things as acts of imitation must be pleasant—for instance, painting, sculpture,

poetry—and every product of skilful imitation; this latter, even if the object imitated is not itself pleasant; for it is not the object itself which here gives delight; the spectator draws inferences (“That is a so-and-so”) and thus learns something fresh.³¹

In contrast, J. H. Freese, in the translation used by the Perseus Digital Library, translates the passage in these terms:

And since learning and admiring are pleasant, all things connected with them must also be pleasant; for instance, a work of imitation, such as painting, sculpture, poetry, and all that is well imitated, even if the object of imitation is not pleasant; for it is not this that causes pleasure or the reverse, but the inference that the imitation and the object imitated are identical, so that the result is that we learn something.³²

The key phrase here is $\pi\alpha\nu\ \tilde{\alpha}\ \tilde{\alpha}\nu\ \epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\ \mu\epsilon\mu\iota\mu\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\nu\ \tilde{\eta}$. Roberts gives this as ‘every product of skilful imitation’, while Freese translates it as ‘all that is well-imitated’. Porter and Kivy take ‘every product of skilful imitation’ to suggest that there are other imitative arts besides the ones Aristotle has listed. These arts would be the other forms of ‘skilful imitation’. But if the Freese translation is correct, and it is certainly more literal, there is no such suggestion. If Freese is right, $\pi\alpha\nu\ \tilde{\alpha}\ \tilde{\alpha}\nu\ \epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\ \mu\epsilon\mu\iota\mu\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\nu\ \tilde{\eta}$ refers to objects that are well-imitated, not to imitations.³³ This interpretation is reinforced by what comes next (in both translations): ‘even if the object imitated is not itself pleasant’ (Roberts) and ‘even if the object of imitation is not pleasant’ (Freese). The point of the passage is that we enjoy seeing imitations of objects (even when the objects in themselves are not pleasant). Aristotle is talking about a variety of objects imitated, not a variety of ways of imitating.

To a certain extent, these reflections on the precise meaning of the text are beside the point. We must not lose sight of the obvious: the passage does not identify any imitative arts besides poetry, painting, and sculpture. Neither does Porter or Kivy identify any. The burden of proof lies with those who hold that Aristotle held that there were imitative arts besides those that he lists. The suggestion that Aristotle believed that there were imitative arts other than poetry, painting, sculpture,

and those he lists elsewhere (music and dance) is pure speculation. I conclude that *Rhetoric* 1371B does not support the view that Aristotle identified imitative arts other than those that Batteux regarded as fine arts.

The ancient conception of the imitative arts could vary from the modern conception of fine arts in two ways. We have just considered the possibility that the imitative arts included arts that are not fine arts. We have found that there is little evidence for this claim. The second possibility is that the ancient conception of the imitative arts failed to match the eighteenth-century conception by failing to include arts that are paradigm fine arts. As we have seen Kristeller adopts this second possibility as well as the discredited first one. His example is architecture. Neither Plato nor Aristotle regards it as an imitative art and yet, Kristeller says, it is a paradigm fine art. So, he concludes, the ancients did not have Batteux’s conception of the arts.

The obvious objection to Kristeller’s reasoning is that Batteux did not classify architecture as a fine art. Neither did many other eighteenth-century writers. One cannot argue that the ancients did not have a conception of the fine arts on the grounds that they excluded architecture when Batteux and others are credited with a conception of the fine arts and explicitly exclude architecture from the fine arts. On the other hand, it begins to be regarded as akin to the other fine arts as early as Vasari and it is on Kames’s list of fine arts: ‘poetry, painting, sculpture, music, gardening, and architecture.’³⁴ As we have seen, however, the system or conception of the fine arts has never been entirely stable. To this day some arts enjoy at best a tenuous membership in the class. Landscape gardening is one such art. Architecture is somewhat better established than gardening, but even now it is not central to the class of fine arts. Kristeller cannot say that the ancient and eighteenth-century conceptions of the arts are fundamentally different by identifying one art on which they do not agree. In particular, he cannot do this by focusing on an art whose fine art status was somewhat marginal in the eighteenth century.

One more objection to my position remains to be considered. I have provided evidence that some people in antiquity had a conception of imitative arts that is parallel to Batteux’s conception of fine arts. I have, however, not looked at all

those writers who provide lists of the arts that, while they may include some of Batteux's arts, include a great many others. Cicero, for example, calls literature and music arts, but he also places arithmetic, grammar, and rhetoric in the arts. Maritani Capella, Kristeller observes, provided the definitive list of liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.³⁵ This system of the arts persisted, with some modification, into the Middle Ages. Surely, someone might object, this counts as evidence against my position.

In fact, however, this is not evidence against my view. Cicero, Maritani Capella, and a host of other writers were not trying to specify membership in the system or category of the imitative or fine arts. They were trying to identify the liberal arts or even, in some cases, the entire list of the arts. Even Batteux talks of arts other than the fine arts. No one believes, even today, that the fine arts are the only arts. Even today we speak of liberal arts, decorative arts, the art of cookery, and the art of war. It does not follow from this that the fine arts are not set apart from the others. And the same was true in antiquity. Kristeller made the mistake of looking at lists that include a variety of arts, fine and otherwise, and concluding that the fine (or imitative) arts were not (in other contexts) distinguished from the others. This is an astounding error and it is even more astounding that so many others have uncritically accepted Kristeller's position. Kristeller makes almost exactly the same error when he looks at modern writers.

3 The Modern System of the Arts

Let us turn now to the question of how original Batteux's position was in modern times. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that Pontanus was not such an outlier as Kristeller suggests. Kristeller and his followers generally support their position by looking at philosophical writings on the arts. These writings do lump together painting, music, poetry, and so on with other arts, such as fencing and grammar. The first point to make is that these writers were not trying to give a system of fine arts. They were giving systems of the arts in general. The second point to make is that Kristeller and others have looked in the

wrong place if they want to find evidence for a conception of the fine arts. We should not look at philosophical writings, which prior to the eighteenth century were only rarely concerned with the arts. Rather, we should look at writings on art by artists and art theorists.

Let us begin by considering Heinrich Glarean (or Glareanus), the author of *Dodecachordon* (1547). Glarean compares the 'masters of counterpoint' to the great 'painters, sculptors, and the preachers of the Divine Word (for about the poets there can be no doubt)' placing them all in a single category.³⁶ Edward E. Lowinsky writes: 'Glareanus appears to be the first [modern] writer to group together music, painting, sculpture, eloquence, poetry, and, as he says, all other arts dedicated to Minerva.'³⁷ Richard Taruskin reaches a similar conclusion.³⁸ Elsewhere, Glarean compares musicians and poets: Josquin to Virgil, Jacob Obrecht to Ovid, Pierre de la Rue to Horace, Heinrich Issac to Lucan, Antoine de Févin to Claudian, and Antoine Brumel to Statius.³⁹

Glarean does not quite give the canonical list of fine arts. Batteux explicitly excludes eloquence and dance is not present on Glarean's list. Lowinsky suggests that Glarean includes eloquence because he was influenced by Plato's *Ion*. In that work, Plato mentions painting, music, poetry, and sculpture in conjunction with the art of the rhapsodist. Lowinsky suggests that Glarean substitutes for the rhapsodists the equivalent of his time: preachers.

That dance is not on the list is not surprising since in the sixteenth century it was not regarded as the art as it had been in antiquity and would become in the seventeenth century. Complaining that dance is not on Glarean's list is a little like complaining that it does not include photography. Moreover, to the extent that dance was regarded as an art in the sixteenth century, it was sometimes regarded as a branch of music rather than as a separate art. For example, Johannes Cochlaeus, in his *Tetrachordum Musices* (1511), identified four different types of musicians. One sort of musician is the sort 'devoted to the histrionic and mimic art, and who move with bodily gestures in imitation of musical sound.'⁴⁰

Other renaissance figures similarly grouped together some or all of the fine arts. Cosimo Bartoli, the prominent Florentine humanist and diplomat, compares musicians, painters,

architects, and sculptors in his *Ragionamenti accademici* (1567):

I am well aware that in his day Ockeghem was, at it were, the first to rediscover music then as good as dead, just as Donatello discovered sculpture in his; and that of Josquin, Ockeghem's pupil, one may say that he was a natural prodigy in music, just as our own Michelangelo Buonarroti has been in architecture, painting, and sculpture; for just as Josquin still has to be surpassed in his composition, so Michelangelo stands alone and without a peer among all who have practiced his arts; and the one and the other have opened the eyes of all who delighted in these arts, now and in the future.⁴¹

Other writers compared poets and musicians. Alessandro Guarini, a leading Ferrarese man of letters, compared Luca Marenzio to Petrarch and Luzzasco Luzzaschi to Dante in *Il farnetico savio overo il Tasso* (1610).⁴²

Next let us reconsider Vasari. As we have seen, Kristeller cites him as someone whose system includes only painting, sculpture, and architecture and does not have Batteux's conception of the fine arts. The only problem is that this is not quite true. He is writing only about those three arts, but he is aware of their affinities to other arts. Writing of Luca della Robbia, Vasari says:

He knows how closely, not only painting, but all the arts of design resemble poetry, knows also that verse proceeding from the poetic *furor* is the only good and true poesy: in like manner the works of men excellent in the arts of design, are much better when produced by the force of a sudden inspiration, than when they are the result of long beating about, and gradual spinning forth with pains and labour.⁴³

In the chapter on Timoteo we find a similar statement. Vasari refers there to 'the close conformity which exists between painting and poetry'.⁴⁴ In the life of Lippo, Vasari goes further:

Invention has ever been and ever will be considered the true mother of architecture, painting, and poetry; nay, rather of all the higher arts, and of all the wonders produced by the genius of men.⁴⁵

At various points in the *Lives* (including the life of Leonardo⁴⁶) Vasari indicates that he considers

music to be among these higher arts. Vasari's list of fine arts includes all of Batteux's canonical arts except dance. I have already explained why this does not show that Vasari's list of the higher arts differs significantly from Batteux's list of fine arts.

So far we have looked at writers on music and the visual arts. It remains to consider writers on poetry or, more generally, literature. When we look at these writers we find that they too had a conception of the arts that encompassed other fine or imitative arts besides poetry. Lodovico Castelvetro, in his *Poetica d'aristotele vulgarizzata et sposta* (1576) adopts Aristotle's views and groups together poetry, painting, music, sculpture, and dance as imitative arts.⁴⁷ Kristeller was aware of Castelvetro and other sixteenth century writers who followed Aristotle in grouping together poetry, painting, music, sculpture, and dance, but puzzlingly denied that these writers regarded the imitative arts as a distinct class. Kristeller asserts that there were other imitative arts besides the usual five, but does not name any of them.⁴⁸ Sir Philip Sidney also followed Aristotle. He writes in his *Apologie for Poetrie* (1595):

Poesie therefore is an arte of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfetting, or figuring forth: to speake metaphorically, a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight.⁴⁹

Sidney follows Aristotle in considering painting and 'musicke' to be arts of imitation. We also hear echoes of Horace, with whom Sidney was very familiar.

Sidney lists many other arts: astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, history, grammar, and a host of others. He also makes clear that they have something in common with arts such as poetry. This may well mislead inattentive readers into thinking that Sidney does not have a conception similar to the modern conception of the fine arts. While the fine arts have something in common with other arts, he clearly distinguishes the fine arts from the others. He marks off poetry (and similar arts of making) from the others:

Where as other Arts retaine themselues within the subiect, and receiue as it were, their being from it: the Poet onely, bringeth his owne stuffe, and dooth not learne a conceite out of a matter, but maketh matter for a conceite.⁵⁰

At a number of points Sidney notes that the Greek word for poetry means to make and, following the Greeks, he regards all of what we would call fine arts as arts of making.

The modern writers considered so far have been from the sixteenth century, but seventeenth-century authors also grouped together painting, poetry, music, and sculpture. For example, Marshall Smith, in his *Art of Poetry*, groups together 'Painting, Poetry and Musick' and, a few pages later, the art of the 'Carver'. These arts are 'the Objects of the two Noble Facultys of the Mind, Conception, and Invention.'⁵¹ In his *A Parallel of Poetry and Painting* (1695), Dryden, drawing on Gian Pietro Bellori's *Le vita del pittore* (1672) associates poetry, painting, and sculpture. It must be admitted that he does not explicitly mention music in this work, but in other contexts music (but not, say, agriculture) is associated with the other (fine) arts.

Later Alexander Pope expressed very much the same system of the arts, but in poetical terms, in his *Essay on Criticism* (1711). Like so many others, he sees the renaissance as the rebirth of the arts:

But see: each *Muse*, in *Leo's* Golden Days,
Starts from her Trance, and trims her
wither'd Bays!
Rome's ancient *Genius*, o'er its *Ruins* spread,
Shakes off the *Dust*, and rears his rev'rend
Head!
Then *Sculpture* and her *Sister-Arts* revive;
Stones leap'd to *Form*, and *Rocks* began to
live;
With sweeter *Notes* each rising *Temple* rung;
A *Raphael* painting, and a *Vida* sung!⁵²

Once again, we have poetry, painting, sculpture, and music grouped together. Only dance is missing. Cookery, grammar, and fencing are nowhere to be seen in this catalogue of 'Sister-Arts'. The image of sister arts was likely taken from Charles-Alphonse Du Fresnoy's poem *De arte graphica* (1668).

At this point, someone might object that in some parts of Europe, even as late as the seventeenth century, some authors were concerned to argue that painting, for example, is a liberal and not a mechanical art. For example, Felix da Costa, in his *Antiquidade da Arte da Pintura* (1696) is at pains to defend the dignity of painting. He wrote:

'It is certain that painting is a liberal art, founded on internal acts, whether of reason or the imagination.'⁵³ A little later, he adds: 'It is necessary in the other arts to supply food and victuals in order to fortify the forces of the body. [But] the [art of painting] depends more upon ingenuity and refinement of understanding.'⁵⁴ The need some authors felt to argue that painting is a liberal art, and to distinguish it from mechanical arts, could be taken to indicate that what we think of as the fine arts were still popularly run together with mechanical arts.

While it is undeniable that some seventeenth-century authors defended the dignity of arts such as painting, and distinguished them from mechanical arts, this does not count against my hypothesis. For a start, a defence of the dignity of painting does not in any way undermine the hypotheses that poetry, painting, sculpture, music and (perhaps) some others form a distinct class. The question is whether what we think of the fine arts was, in the seventeenth century, recognized as a distinct group. The question is not whether these arts were regarded as belonging to one higher level category of arts (liberal) rather than another (mechanical). Moreover, when the liberality of one art (such as painting) is defended, it is often grouped with other arts that we regard as fine. For example, when da Costa asserts the liberality of painting he does so, in part, by stressing its similarity to poetry, making reference to Horace's *Art of Poetry*.⁵⁵ Similarly, when Marshall Smith defends the dignity of painting, he does so by grouping it with poetry and music.⁵⁶

Finally, let us turn to the early eighteenth century. Charles Rollin, in his *History of the Arts and Sciences of the Ancients*,⁵⁷ groups together (under the rubric of 'Liberal Arts and Sciences') poetry, painting, sculpture, music, dance and architecture. These are clearly distinguished from other arts. James Harris' *Three Treatises* (1744) is an interesting case because it illustrates how poetry, painting, sculpture, and music could be part of a larger class of arts while yet being in a class of their own. Harris writes:

It is hardly probable ... that Music, Painting, Medicine, Poetry, Agriculture, and so many more should be *all called by one common Name* [i.e. 'art'], if there was not something in each which was common to all.⁵⁸

This is precisely the sort of passage that Kristeller cites in support of his hypothesis. However, Harris goes on to distinguish the fine arts from others. He writes:

All arts have this in common, that *they respect Human Life*. Some contribute to its *Necessities*, as Medicine and Agriculture; others to its *Elegance*, as Music, Painting, and Poetry.

Later he adds sculpture to the list of arts that contribute to the elegance of life.⁵⁹ Once again, dance is not on the list, but in England at this time, dance was still a recreation and not an art. (The Italian opera heard in England, unlike the opera heard in France, did not feature dancing.)

One of the immediate sources of Batteux's conception of the fine arts is Toussaint Remond de Saint-Mard. Batteux refers to this passage from his *Réflexions sur la poésie*: 'Poetry, music and painting are the three arts dedicated to pleasure. All three are made to imitate nature; all three are designed to imitate the emotions. If you take this away, you dishonour the arts and leave them on shaky ground.'⁶⁰ Remond de Saint-Mard also seems to have coined the expression 'beaux arts',⁶¹ which Batteux appropriated.

Finally, let us consider Dubos, among the last of the predecessors of Batteux mentioned by Kristeller. According to Kristeller he does not present a systematic list of the fine arts or distinguish these arts from others. Unfortunately, this is not quite true. It is true that Dubos does not provide a systematic list of the fine arts, but it was not his intention to do so. His book is more a miscellaneous collection of reflections (as the title suggests) rather than a systematic treatise. He does, however, clearly group together painting, poetry, sculpture, and music and clearly distinguish them from other arts. (Dance is the only art on Batteux's list that is missing from Dubos's.) In the course of his book, Dubos refers at various points to the arts of training gladiators, rhetoric, architecture, printing, and playing military instruments (such as trumpets).⁶² Again the inattentive reader may be misled. From the very beginning of the work, however, he separates out the arts that are produced by artists who deserve to be called 'illustrious' or to have applied to them 'some other proper epithet'.⁶³ Dubos makes clear that the illustrious artists produce imitative arts, as Aristotle before,

and Batteux subsequently, believed. This is even true of music: 'The musician imitates the notes, accents, sighs, and inflexions of the voice; and in short all those sounds, by which nature herself expresses her sentiments and passions.'⁶⁴

4 Conclusion

Let us try to draw the conclusions of these reflections on what the ancients and moderns had to say about the arts prior to Batteux. For a start, Kristeller is clearly right and the ancients had a conception of art that embraced much more than what we regard as the fine arts. This broad conception of the arts persisted through the middle ages and into the eighteenth century. To a certain extent it continues to this day: we still speak of the art of cookery or the art of war without thinking that either cookery or military strategy is a fine art. Typically we continue to distinguish the fine arts from the decorative arts.

The second conclusion is that Aristotle, and likely other ancients, including Horace and Plato, had a conception of imitative arts that closely corresponds to Batteux's conception of fine arts. The imitative arts were poetry, painting, music, sculpture, and dance in Aristotle and Plato, just as they were in Batteux.

The third conclusion is that Aristotle's category of the imitative arts may have fallen into disuse, at least to some extent. A broader conception of the arts, one that included Aristotle's imitative arts, became common, at least in some contexts during the Middle Ages. If Aristotle's conception of the imitative arts had fallen into abeyance, it was revived in the course of the sixteenth century. It did not emerge in the eighteenth century as Kristeller believes. In the works of authors such as Bartoli, Glarean, Pontanus, Sidney, Vasari, and others we see Aristotle's imitative arts clearly established as a category quite distinct from other arts. In some cases, we know that some of these writers (such as Sidney and Castelvetro) were explicitly following the ancients. Likely others, including Glarean, were as well. By the time we reach Pope and Dubos, a conception of the fine arts (as Remond de Saint-Mard called them) was so well established as to be taken for granted. Batteux simply codified the accepted system of the arts.

Above, I characterized Kristeller's position on the history of the concept of the fine arts as orthodoxy. It is really more of a dogma. It is an article of faith more than it is a conclusion reached on the basis of an accurate reading of the history of aesthetics.⁶⁵

Notes

- 1 Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (I)', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951), 496–527; and 'The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (II)', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13 (1952), 17–46.
- 2 Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts (I)', 509.
- 3 Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts (II)', 19.
- 4 Charles Batteux, *Les Beaux arts réduits à un même principe*, nouvelle edition (Leiden: Elie Luzac, 1753), 12.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 For example, Henrik Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 32. Kristeller re-worked material from his original essay for 'Origins of Aesthetics', in Michael Kelly (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 416–428.
- 7 For example, in Peter Kivy (ed.), *Essays on the History of Aesthetics* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1992), 3–64.
- 8 Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
- 9 James I. Porter, 'Is Art Modern? Kristeller's "Modern System of the Arts" Reconsidered', *BJA* 49 (2009), 1–24.
- 10 Peter Kivy, 'What Really Happened in the Eighteenth Century: The "Modern System" Re-examined (Again)', *BJA* 52 (2012), 64–74.
- 11 Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).
- 12 Batteux, *Les Beaux arts réduits à un même principe*, 12. Batteux refers to Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447a.
- 13 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.981B. All translations of ancient texts are from the Perseus Digital Library except where noted.
- 14 W. D. Ross (ed.), *Aristotle's Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: OUP, 1924), 118.
- 15 Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1371B.
- 16 Batteux, *Les Beaux arts réduits à un même principe*, 4.
- 17 Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447A.
- 18 Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447a.
- 19 Socrates, *Cratylus* 423C–D.
- 20 Plato, *Laws* 2.655D.
- 21 Plato, *Laws* 7.812B–C.
- 22 Plato, *Laws* 7.798D–E.
- 23 Plato, *Sophist* 235E.
- 24 Plato, *Hippias Major* 281D.
- 25 Plato, *Gorgias* 463b.
- 26 Plato, *Epinomis* 975D.
- 27 Kristeller, 'Modern System of the Arts (I)', 504.
- 28 Plato, *Sophist* 235a.
- 29 Porter, 'Is Art Modern?', 8. Porter quotes from the translation of *Rhetoric* by W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library, 1954).
- 30 Peter Kivy, 'What Really Happened in the Eighteenth Century', 68.
- 31 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Dover, 2004), 43.
- 32 Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* (London: William Heinemann, 1926), 125.
- 33 Here is the passage in the original Greek: ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ μαρθάνειν τε ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ θαυμάζειν, καὶ τὰ τοιάδε ἀνάγκη ἡδέα εἶναι, οἷον τὸ τε μιμούμενον, ὥσπερ γραφικὴ καὶ ἀνδριαντοποιία καὶ ποιητικὴ, καὶ πᾶν ὃ ἂν εὖ μεμιμημένον ᾖ, καὶ ἢ μὴ ἡδὺ αὐτὸ τὸ μεμιμημένον. Here is a literal, word-for-word, translation of the key phrase: πᾶν: every(thing, neuter singular); ὃ ἂν: whatever—ὃ is a relative pronoun ('what'), and ἂν here indicates 'ever'; εὖ: well; μεμιμημένον: imitated—perfect passive participle; ἢ: is/may be, subjunctive with ἂν. So, 'Everything, whatever (is/may be) well imitated' is a literal translation.
- 34 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (Edinburgh, 1762), 6.
- 35 Kristeller, 'Modern System of the Arts (II)', 505.
- 36 Quoted in Edward E. Lowinsky, 'Musical Genius—Evolution and Origins of a Concept—II', *Musical Quarterly* 50 (1964), 479.
- 37 Ibid., 480.
- 38 Richard Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music*, <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com>, ch. 14.
- 39 Heinrich Glarean, *Dodecachordon*, Vol. 2, trans. Clement A. Miller (n.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1965), 264–265.
- 40 Johannes Cochaeus, *Tetrachordum Musices*, trans. Clement A. Miller (n.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1970), 23.
- 41 Quoted in Edward E. Lowinsky, 'Music of the Renaissance as Viewed by Renaissance Musicians', in Bernard O'Kelly (ed.), *The Renaissance Image of Man and the World*, (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1966), 141.
- 42 James Haar, 'Cosimo Bartoli on Music', *Early Music History* 8 (1988), 57.

- 43 Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Vol. 1, trans. Jonathan Foster (London: George Bell and Sons, 1894), 338.
- 44 Ibid., Vol. 3, 110.
- 45 Ibid., Vol. 1, 275.
- 46 Ibid., Vol. 2, 367.
- 47 Andrew Bongiorno, *Castelvetro on the Art of Poetry: An Abridged Translation of Lodovico Castelvetro's Poetica d'Aristotele Vulgarizzata et Sposta* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984), 9.
- 48 Kristeller, 'Modern System of the Arts (I)', 511–12.
- 49 Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie For Poetrie* (London: Murray and Son, 1868), 26–27.
- 50 Ibid., 48.
- 51 Marshall Smith, *The Art of Painting According to the Theory and Practise of the Best Italian, French, and German Masters*, 2nd edn (London: 1693), 1–2, 10.
- 52 Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (London: W. Lewis, 1711), 40.
- 53 Felix da Costa, *The Antiquity of the Art of Painting*, trans. George Kubler, George L. Hersey, Robert F. Thompson, Nancy G. Thompson, and Catherine Wilkinson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 397.
- 54 Ibid., 401.
- 55 Ibid., 401.
- 56 Smith, *The Art of Painting*, 2.
- 57 Charles Rollin, *The History of the Arts and Sciences of the Ancients*, trans. James Bell (Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton, & Co., 1829), 99ff.
- 58 James Harris, *Three Treatises*, 2nd edn (London: John Nourse, 1765), 5.
- 59 Ibid., 53. For the addition of sculpture to the list see 152 and 279.
- 60 Batteux, *Réflexions sur la poésie* (La Haye: C. de Rogissart, 1734), 45.
- 61 Ibid., 314.
- 62 Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music*, trans. Thomas Nugent (London: John Nourse, 1748), 13, 31, 293, 333 and 365.
- 63 Ibid., 3–4.
- 64 Ibid., 360–361.
- 65 I am grateful to Laurel Bowman for her advice on translating Greek. I would also like to thank two anonymous referees for this journal.

3

Ion

Plato

Plato (ca. 428–347 BCE), the famed Athenian philosopher, wrote a series of dialogues, most of which feature his teacher Socrates (469–399 BCE), who himself wrote nothing but, in conversation, was able to befuddle the most powerful minds of his day.

530 SOCRATES: Ion! Hello. Where have you come from to visit us this time? From your home in Ephesus?

 ION: No, no, Socrates. From Epidaurus, from the festival of Asclepius.

 SOCRATES: Don't tell me the Epidaurians hold a contest for *rhapsodes* in honor of the god?

 ION: They certainly do! They do it for every sort of poetry and music.

 SOCRATES: Really! Did you enter the contest? And how did it go for you?

b ION: First prize, Socrates! We carried it off.

 SOCRATES: That's good to hear. Well, let's see that we win the big games at Athens, next.

 ION: We'll do it, Socrates, god willing.

 SOCRATES: You know, Ion, many times I've envied you rhapsodes your profession. Physically, it is always fitting for you in your profession to be dressed up to look as beautiful as you can; and at the same time it is necessary for you to be at

work with poets – many fine ones, and with Homer above all, who's the best poet and the most divine – and you have to learn his thought, not just his verses! Now that is something to envy! I mean, no one would ever get to be a good rhapsode if he didn't understand what is meant by the poet. A rhapsode must come to present the poet's thought to his audience; and he can't do that beautifully unless he knows what the poet means. So this all deserves to be envied.

 ION: That's true, Socrates. And that's the part of my profession that took the most work. I think I speak more beautifully than anyone else about Homer; neither Metrodorus of Lampsacus nor Stesimbrotus of Thasos nor Glaucon nor anyone else past or present could offer as many beautiful thoughts about Homer as I can.

 SOCRATES: That's good to hear, Ion. Surely you won't begrudge me a demonstration?

 ION: Really, Socrates, it's worth hearing how well I've got Homer dressed up. I think I'm worthy to be crowned by the Sons of Homer¹ with a golden crown.

 SOCRATES: Really, I shall make time to hear that later. Now I'd just like an answer to this: Are you so wonderfully clever about Homer alone – or also about Hesiod and Archilochus?

Plato, from *Two Comic Dialogues: Ion and Hippias Major*, translated by Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis, IN/ Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1983, pp. 21–35. Reproduced with permission of Hackett Publishing.

ION: No, no. Only about Homer. That's good enough, I think.

SOCRATES: Is there any subject on which Homer and Hesiod both say the same things?

ION: Yes, I think so. A good many.

SOCRATES: Then, on those subjects, would you explain Homer's verse better and more beautifully than Hesiod's?

b ION: Just the same Socrates, on those subjects, anyway, where they say the same things.

SOCRATES: And how about the subjects on which they do not say the same things? Divination, for example. Homer says something about it and so does Hesiod.

ION: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Well. Take all the places where those two poets speak of divination, both where they agree and where they don't: who would explain those better and more beautifully, you, or one of the diviners if he's good?

ION: One of the diviners.

SOCRATES: Suppose *you* were a diviner: if you were really able to explain the places where the two poets agree, wouldn't you also know how to explain the places where they disagree?

ION: That's clear.

c SOCRATES: Then what in the world is it that you're clever about in Homer but not in Hesiod and the other poets? Does Homer speak of any subjects that differ from those of *all* the other poets? Doesn't he mainly go through tales of war, and of how people deal with each other in society – good people and bad, ordinary folks and craftsmen? And of the gods, how *they* deal with each other and with men? And doesn't he recount what happens in heaven and in hell, and tell of the births of gods and heroes? Those are the subjects of Homer's poetry-making, aren't they?

ION: That's true, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And how about the other poets? Did they write on the same subjects?

ION: Yes, but Socrates, they didn't do it the way Homer did.

SOCRATES: How, then? Worse?

ION: Much worse.

SOCRATES: And Homer does it better?

ION: *Really* better.

d SOCRATES: Well now, Ion, dear heart, when a number of people are discussing arithmetic, and one of them speaks best, I suppose *someone* will know how to pick out the good speaker.

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: Will it be the same person who can pick out the bad speakers, or someone else?

ION: The same, of course.

SOCRATES: And that will be someone who has mastered arithmetic, right?

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well. Suppose a number of people are discussing healthy nutrition, and one of them speaks best. Will one person know that the best speaker speaks best, and another that an inferior speaker speaks worse? Or will the same man know both?

ION: Obviously, the same man.

SOCRATES: Who is he? What do we call him?

ION: A doctor.

SOCRATES: So, to sum it up, this is what we're saying: when a number of people speak on the same subject, it's always the same person who will know how to pick out good speakers and bad speakers. If he doesn't know how to pick out a bad speaker, he certainly won't know a good speaker – on the same subject, anyway.

ION: That's so.

SOCRATES: Then it turns out that the same person is "wonderfully clever" about both speakers.

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now *you* claim that Homer and the other poets (including Hesiod and Archilochus) speak on the same subjects, but not equally well. *He's* good, and they're inferior.

ION: Yes, and it's true.

SOCRATES: Now if you really do know who's speaking well, you'll know that the inferior speakers are speaking worse.

ION: Apparently so.

SOCRATES: You're superb! So if we say that Ion is equally clever about Homer and the other poets, we'll make no mistake. Because you agree yourself that the same person will be an adequate judge of all who speak on the same subjects, and that almost all the poets *do* treat the same subjects.

ION: Then how in the world do you explain what *I* do, Socrates? When someone discusses another poet I pay no attention, and I have no power to contribute anything worthwhile: I simply doze off. But let someone mention Homer and right away I'm wide awake and I'm paying attention and I have plenty to say.

SOCRATES: *That's* not hard to figure out, my friend. Anyone can tell that you are powerless to speak about Homer on the basis of knowledge or mastery. Because if your ability came by mastery, you would be able to speak about all the other poets as well. Look, there is an art of poetry as a whole, isn't there?

ION: Yes.

d SOCRATES: And now take the whole of *any* other subject: won't it have the same discipline throughout? And this goes for every subject that can be mastered. Do you need me to tell you what I mean by this, Ion?

ION: Lord, yes, I do, Socrates. I love to hear you wise men talk.

e SOCRATES: I wish that were true, Ion. But wise? Surely you are the wise men, you rhapsodes and actors, you and the poets whose work you sing. As for me, I say nothing but the truth, as you'd expect from an ordinary man. I mean, even this question I asked you – look how commonplace and ordinary a matter it is. Anybody could understand what I meant: don't you use the same discipline throughout whenever you master the whole of a subject? Take this for discussion – painting is a subject to be mastered as a whole, isn't it?

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: And there are many painters, good and bad, and there have been many in the past.

ION: Certainly.

533 SOCRATES: Have you ever known anyone who is clever at showing what's well painted and what's not in the work of Polygnotus, but who's powerless to do that for other painters? Someone who dozes off when the work of other painters is displayed, and is lost, and has nothing to contribute – but when he has to give judgment on Polygnotus or any other painter (so long as it's just *one*), he's wide awake and he's paying attention and he has plenty to say – have you ever known anyone like that?

ION: Good lord no, of course not!

b SOCRATES: Well. Take sculpture. Have you ever known anyone who is clever at explaining which statues are well made in the case of Daedalus, son of Metion, or Epeius, son of Panopeus, or Theodorus of Samos, or any other *single* sculptor, but who's lost when he's among the products of other sculptors, and he dozes off and has nothing to say?

ION: Good lord no. I haven't.

SOCRATES: And further, it is my opinion, you've never known anyone ever – not in flute-playing, not in cithara-playing, not in singing to the cithara, and not in rhapsodizing – you've never known a man who is clever at explaining c Olympus or Thamyrys or Orpheus or Phemius, the rhapsode from Ithaca, but who has nothing to contribute about Ion, the rhapsode from Ephesus, and cannot tell when he does his work well and when he doesn't – you've never known a man like that.

ION: I have nothing to say against you on that point, Socrates. But *this* I know about myself: I speak about Homer more beautifully than anybody else and I have lots to say; and everybody says I do it well. But about the other poets I do not. Now see what that means.

d SOCRATES: I do see, Ion, and I'm going to announce to you what I think that is. As I said earlier, that's not a subject you've mastered – speaking well about Homer; it's a divine power that moves you, as a "Magnetic" stone moves iron rings. (That's what Euripides called it; most people call it "Heracleian.")² This stone not only pulls those rings, if they're iron, it also puts power e in the rings, so that they in turn can do just what the stone does – pull other rings – so that there's sometimes a very long chain of iron pieces and rings hanging from one another. And the power in all of them depends on this stone. In the same way, the Muse makes some people inspired herself, and then through those who are inspired a chain of other enthusiasts is suspended. You know, none of the epic poets, if they're good, are masters of their subject; they are inspired, possessed, and that is how they utter all those beautiful poems. The same goes for lyric poets if 534 they're good: just as the Corybantes are not in their right minds when they dance, lyric poets, too, are not in their right minds when they make those beautiful lyrics, but as soon as they sail into harmony and rhythm they are possessed by Bacchic frenzy. Just as Bacchus worshippers³ when they are possessed draw honey and milk from rivers, but not when they are in their right minds – the soul of a lyric poet does this too, as they say themselves. For of course poets tell us b that they gather songs at honey-flowing springs, from glades and gardens of the Muses, and that they bear songs to us as bees carry honey, flying

like bees. And what they say is true. For a poet is an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him. As long as a human being has his intellect in his possession he will always lack the power to make poetry or sing prophecy. Therefore because it's not by mastery that they make poems or say many lovely things about their subjects (as you do about Homer) – but because it's by a divine gift – each poet is able to compose beautifully only that for which the Muse has aroused him: one can do dithyrambs, another encomia, one can do dance songs, another, epics, and yet another, iambics; and each of them is worthless for the other types of poetry. You see, it's not mastery that enables them to speak those verses, but a divine power, since if they knew how to speak beautifully on one type of poetry by mastering the subject, they could do so for all the others also. That's why the god takes their intellect away from them when he uses them as his servants, as he does prophets and godly diviners, so that we who hear should know that *they* are not the ones who speak those verses that are of such high value, for their intellect is not in them: the god himself is the one who speaks, and he gives voice through them to us. The best evidence for this account is Tynnichus from Chalcis, who never made a poem anyone would think worth mentioning, *except* for the praise-song everyone sings, almost the most beautiful lyric-poem there is, and simply, as he says himself, “an invention of the Muses.” In this more than anything, then, I think, the god is showing us, so that we should be in no doubt about it, that these beautiful poems are not human, not even *from* human beings, but are divine and from gods; that poets are nothing but representatives of the gods, possessed by whoever possesses them. To show *that*, the god deliberately sang the most beautiful lyric poem through the most worthless poet. Don't you think I'm right, Ion?

ION: Lord yes, *I* certainly do. Somehow you touch my soul with your words, Socrates, and I do think it's by a divine gift that good poets are able to present these poems to us from the gods.

SOCRATES: And you rhapsodes in turn present what the poets say.

ION: That's true too.

SOCRATES: So you turn out to be representatives of representatives.

ION: Quite right.

SOCRATES: Hold on, Ion; tell me this. Don't keep any secrets from *me*. When you recite epic poetry well and you have the most stunning effect on your spectators, either when you sing of Odysseus – how he leapt into the doorway, his identity now obvious to the suitors, and he poured out arrows at his feet – or when you sing of Achilles charging at Hector, or when you sing a pitiful episode about Andromache or Hecuba or Priam, are you at that time in your right mind, or do you get beside yourself? And doesn't your soul, in its enthusiasm, believe that it is present at the actions you describe, whether they're in Ithaca or in Troy or wherever the epic actually takes place?

ION: What a vivid example you've given me, Socrates! I won't keep secrets from *you*. Listen, when *I* tell a sad story, my eyes are full of tears; and when *I* tell a story that's frightening or awful, my hair stands on end with fear and my heart jumps.

SOCRATES: Well, Ion, should we say this man is in his right mind at times like these: when he's at festivals or celebrations, all dressed up in fancy clothes, with golden crowns, and he weeps, though he's lost none of his finery – or when he's standing among millions of friendly people and he's frightened, though no one is undressing him or doing him any harm? Is he in his right mind then?

ION: Lord no, Socrates. Not at all, to tell the truth.

SOCRATES: And you know that you have the same effects on most of your spectators too, don't you?

ION: I know very well that we do. I look down at them every time from up on the rostrum, and they're crying and looking terrified, and as the stories are told they are filled with amazement. You see I must keep my wits and pay close attention to them: if I start them crying, *I* will laugh as I take their money, but if *they* laugh, I shall cry at having lost money.

SOCRATES: And you know that this spectator is the last of the rings, don't you – the ones that I said take their power from each other by virtue of the Heracleian stone [the magnet]? The middle ring is you, the rhapsode or actor, and the first one is the poet himself. The god pulls people's

souls through all these wherever he wants, looping the power down from one to another. And just as if it hung from that stone, there's an enormous chain of choral dancers and dance teachers and assistant teachers hanging off to the sides of the rings that are suspended from the Muse. One poet is attached to one Muse, another to another (we say he is "possessed," and that's near enough, for he is *held*). From these first rings, from the poets, *they* are attached in their turn and inspired, some from one poet, some from another: some from Orpheus, some from Musaeus, and many are possessed and held from Homer. You are one of *them*, Ion, and you are possessed from Homer. And when anyone sings the work of another poet, you're asleep and you're lost about what to say; but when any song of that poet is sounded, you are immediately awake, your soul is dancing, and you have plenty to say. You see it's not because you're a master of knowledge about Homer that you can say what you say, but because of a divine gift, because you are possessed. That's how it is with the Corybantes, who have sharp ears only for the specific song that belongs to whatever god possesses them; they have plenty of words and movements to go with *that* song; but they are quite lost if the music is different. That's how it is with you, Ion: when anyone mentions Homer, you have plenty to say, but if he mentions the others you are lost; and the explanation of this, for which you ask me – why it is that you have plenty to say about Homer but not about the others – is that it's not mastering the subject, but a divine gift, that makes you a wonderful singer of Homer's praises.

ION: You're a good speaker, Socrates. Still, I would be amazed if you could speak well enough to convince me that I am possessed or crazed when I praise Homer. I don't believe you'd think so if you heard me speaking on Homer.

SOCRATES: And I really do want to hear you, but not before you answer me this: on which of Homer's subjects do you speak well? I don't suppose you speak well on *all* of them.

ION: I do, Socrates, believe me, on every single one!

SOCRATES: Surely not on those subjects you happen to know nothing about, even if Homer does speak of them.

ION: And these subjects Homer speaks of, but I don't know about – what are they?

SOCRATES: But doesn't Homer speak about professional subjects in many places, and say a great deal? Chariot driving, for example, I'll show you, if I can remember the lines.

ION: No, I'll recite them. I *do* remember.

SOCRATES: Then tell me what Nestor says to his son Antilochus, when he advises him to take care at the turning post in the horse race they held for Patroclus' funeral.

ION: "Lean," he says,

*Lean yourself over on the smooth-planed chariot
Just to the left of the pair. Then the horse on the
right –
Goad him, shout him on, easing the reins with
your hands.
At the post let your horse on the left stick tight to
the turn
So you seem to come right to the edge, with the
hub
Of your welded wheel. But escape cropping the
stone . . .*⁴

SOCRATES: That's enough. Who would know better, Ion, whether Homer speaks correctly or not in these particular verses – a doctor or a charioteer?

ION: A charioteer, of course.

SOCRATES: Is that because he is a master of that profession, or for some other reason?

ION: No. It's because he's a master of it.

SOCRATES: Then to each profession a god has granted the ability to know a certain function. I mean, the things navigation teaches us – we won't learn them from medicine as well, will we?

ION: Of course not.

SOCRATES: And the things medicine teaches us we won't learn from architecture.

ION: Of course not.

SOCRATES: And so it is for every other profession: what we learn by mastering one profession we won't learn by mastering another, right? But first, answer me this. Do you agree that there are different professions – that one is different from another?

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: And is this how you determine which ones are different? When I find that the knowledge [involved in one case] deals with different subjects from the knowledge [in another case], then I claim that one is a different profession from the other. Is that what you do?

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: I mean if there is some knowledge of the same subjects, then why should we say there are two different professions? – Especially when each of them would allow us to know the same subjects! Take these fingers: I know there are five of them, and you know the same thing about them that I do. Now suppose I asked you whether it's the same profession – arithmetic – that teaches you and me the same things, or whether it's two different ones. Of course you'd say it's the same one.

ION: Yes.

538 SOCRATES: Then tell me now what I was going to ask you earlier. Do you think it's the same way for every profession – the same profession must teach the same subjects, and a different profession, if it is different, must teach not the same subjects, but different ones?

ION: That's how I think it is, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then a person who has not mastered a given profession will not be able to be a good judge of the things which belong to that profession, whether they are things said or things done.

b ION: That's true.

SOCRATES: Then who will know better whether or not Homer speaks beautifully and well in the lines you quoted? You, or a charioteer?

ION: A charioteer.

SOCRATES: That's because you're a rhapsode, of course, and not a charioteer.

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the rhapsode's profession is different from the charioteer's.

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: If it's different, then its knowledge is of different subjects also.

ION: Yes.

c SOCRATES: Then what about the time Homer tells how Hecamede, Nestor's woman, gave barley-medicine to Machaon to drink? He says something like this –

*Over wine of Pramnos she grated goat's milk
cheese
With a brazen grater. . . . And onion relish for
the drink . . .*⁵

Is Homer right or not: would a fine diagnosis here come from a doctor's profession or a rhapsode's?

ION: A doctor's.

SOCRATES: And what about the time Homer says:

*Leaden she plunged to the floor of the sea like a
weight
That is fixed to a field cow's horn. Given to the
hunt
It goes among ravenous fish, carrying death.*⁶ d

Should we say it's for a fisherman's profession or a rhapsode's to tell whether or not he describes this beautifully and well?

ION: That's obvious, Socrates. It's for a fisherman's.

SOCRATES: All right, look. Suppose you were e the one asking questions, and you asked me, "Socrates, since you're finding out which passages belong to each of the professions Homer treats – which are the passages that each profession should judge – come tell me this: which are the passages that belong to a diviner and to divination, passages he should be able to judge as to whether they're well or badly composed?" Look how easily I can give you a true answer. Often, in the *Odyssey*, he says things like what Theoclymenus says – the prophet of the sons of Melampus:

*Are you mad? What evil is this that's upon you?
Night
Has enshrouded your hands, your faces, and
down to your knees.
Wailing spreads like fire, tears wash your cheeks.
Ghosts fill the dooryard, ghosts fill the hall, they
rush
To the black gate of hell, they drop below
darkness. Sunlight
Has died from a sky run over with evil mist.*⁷ 539 b

And often in the *Iliad*, as in the battle at the wall. There he says:

*There came to them a bird as they hungered to
cross over.
An eagle, a high-flier, circled the army's left
With a blood-red serpent carried in its talons, a
monster,
Alive, still breathing, it has not yet forgotten its
warlust,
For it struck its captor on the breast, by the neck;
It was writhing back, but the eagle shot it
groundwards* c

In agony of pain, and dropped it in the midst of the throng,

d *Then itself, with a scream, soared on a breath of the wind.*⁸

I shall say that these passages and those like them belong to a diviner. They are for him to examine and judge.

ION: That's a true answer, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Well, *your* answers are true, too, Ion. Now *you* tell me – just as I picked out for you, from the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, passages that e belong to a diviner and ones that belong to a doctor and ones that belong to a fisherman – in the same way, Ion, since you have more experience with Homer's work than I do, you pick out for me the passages that belong to the rhapsode and to his profession, the passages a rhapsode should be able to examine and to judge better than anyone else.

ION: My answer, Socrates, is "all of them."

SOCRATES: That's not *your* answer, Ion. Not "all of them." Or are you really so forgetful? But no, it would not befit a *rhapsode* to be forgetful.

540 ION: What do you think I'm forgetting?

SOCRATES: Don't you remember you said that a rhapsode's profession is different from a charioteer's?

ION: I remember.

SOCRATES: And didn't you agree that because they are different they will know different subjects?

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: So a rhapsode's profession, on *your* view, will not know everything, and neither will a rhapsode.

ION: But things like that are exceptions, Socrates.

b SOCRATES: By "things like that" you mean that almost all the subjects of the other professions are exceptions, don't you? But then what sort of thing *will* a rhapsode know, if not everything?

ION: My opinion, anyhow, is that he'll know what it's fitting for a man or a woman to say – or for a slave or a freeman, or for a follower or a leader.

SOCRATES: So – what should a leader say when he's at sea and his ship is hit by a storm – do you mean a rhapsode will know better than a navigator?

ION: No, no. A navigator will know *that*.

SOCRATES: And when he is in charge of a sick c man, what should a leader say – will a rhapsode know better than a doctor?

ION: Not that, either.

SOCRATES: But he *will* know what a slave should say. Is that what you mean?

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: For example, what should a slave who's a cowherd say to calm down his cattle when they're going wild – will a rhapsode know what a cowherd does not?

ION: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: And what a woman who spins yarn should say about working with wool? d

ION: No.

SOCRATES: And what a man should say, if he's a general, to encourage his troops?

ION: Yes! That's the sort of thing a rhapsode will know.

SOCRATES: What? Is a rhapsode's profession the same as a general's?

ION: Well, *I* certainly would know what a general should say.

SOCRATES: Perhaps that's because you're also a general by profession, Ion. I mean, if you were somehow both a horseman and a cithara-player at the same time, you would e know good riders from bad. But suppose I asked you: "Which profession teaches you good horse-manship – the one that makes you a horseman, or the one that makes you a cithara-player?"

ION: The horseman, I'd say.

SOCRATES: Then if you also knew good cithara-players from bad, the profession that taught you *that* would be the one which made you a cithara-player, not the one that made you a horseman. Wouldn't you agree?

ION: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, since you know the business of a general, do you know this by being a general or by being a good rhapsode?

ION: I don't think there's any difference.

SOCRATES: What? Are you saying there's no 541 difference? On your view is there one profession for rhapsodes and generals, or two?

ION: One, I think.

SOCRATES: So anyone who is a good rhapsode turns out to be a good general too.

ION: Certainly, Socrates.

SOCRATES: It also follows that anyone who turns out to be a good general is a good rhapsode too.

ION: No. This time I don't agree.

b SOCRATES: But you do agree to this: anyone who is a good rhapsode is a good general too.

ION: I quite agree.

SOCRATES: And aren't you the best rhapsode in Greece?

ION: By far, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Are you also a general, Ion? Are you the best in Greece?

ION: Certainly, Socrates. That, too, I learned from Homer's poetry.

c SOCRATES: Then why in heaven's name, Ion, when you're both the best general *and* the best rhapsode in Greece, do you go around the country giving rhapsodies but not commanding troops? Do you think Greece really needs a rhapsode who is crowned with a golden crown? And does not need a general?

ION: Socrates, *my* city is governed and commanded by you [by Athens]; we don't need a general. Besides, neither your city nor Sparta would choose me for a general. You think you're good enough for that yourselves.

SOCRATES: Ion, you're superb. Don't you know Apollodorus of Cyzicus?

ION: What does *he* do?

d SOCRATES: He's a foreigner who has often been chosen by Athens to be their general. And Phanosthenes of Andros and Heraclides of Clazomenae – they're also foreigners; they've demonstrated that they are worth noticing, and Athens appoints them to be generals or other sorts of officials. And do you think that *this* city, that makes such appointments, would not select Ion of Ephesus and honor him, if they thought he was worth noticing? Why? Aren't e you people from Ephesus Athenians of long standing? And isn't Ephesus a city that is second to none?

But *you*, Ion, you're doing me wrong, if what you say is true that what enables you to praise Homer is knowledge or mastery of a profession. You assured me that you knew many lovely things about Homer, you promised to give a

demonstration; but you're cheating me, you're a long way from giving a demonstration. You aren't even willing to tell me what it is that you're so wonderfully clever *about*, though I've been begging you for ages. Really, you're just like Proteus,⁹ you twist up and down and take many different shapes, till finally you've escaped me altogether by turning yourself into a general, so as to avoid proving how wonderfully wise you are about Homer.

If you're really a master of your subject, and if, as I said earlier, you're cheating me of the demonstration you promised about Homer, then you're doing me wrong. But if you're not a master of your subject, if you're possessed by a divine gift from Homer, so that you make many lovely speeches about the poet without knowing anything – as *I* said about you – then you're not doing me wrong. So choose, how do you want us to think of you – as a *man* who does wrong, or as someone *divine*?

ION: There's a great difference, Socrates. It's b much lovelier to be thought divine.

SOCRATES: Then *that* is how we think of you, Ion, the lovelier way: it's as someone divine, and not as master of a profession, that you are a singer of Homer's praises.

Translator's Notes

- 1 The sons of Homer were a guild of rhapsodes who originally claimed to be descendants of Homer.
- 2 Natural magnets apparently came from Magnesia and Heracles in Caria in Asia Minor, and were called after those places.
- 3 Bacchus worshippers apparently danced themselves into a frenzy in which they found streams flowing with honey and milk (Euripides, *Bacchae* 708–11).
- 4 *Iliad* xxiii.335–40.
- 5 *Iliad* xi.639–40 with 630.
- 6 *Iliad* xxiv.80–2.
- 7 *Odyssey* xx.351–7; line 354 is omitted by Plato.
- 8 *Iliad* xii.200–7.
- 9 Proteus was a servant of Posidon. He had the power to take whatever shape he wanted in order to avoid answering questions (*Odyssey* iv.385ff.).

The Republic

Plato

Book X

595 Well, I continued, I must say that, while I am led by a variety of considerations to believe that we were unquestionably right in our plans for organizing the city, I am most convinced when I think of our regulations concerning poetry.

What was the nature of them?

They were to the effect that we ought on no account to admit that branch of poetry which is imitative; and now that each of the forms of the soul have been each separately defined, the conviction that such poetry more than anything else
b must not be admitted is to my mind even clearer than it was before.

Explain what you mean.

I am quite sure that you will not denounce me to the tragedians, and the whole company of imitative poets, and therefore I do not mind saying to you, that all imitative poetry would seem to maim the reasoning of those hearers who do not possess an antidote in the knowledge of its real nature.

And what is the point of your remarks?

I must speak my mind, although I confess I am inhibited by a kind of shame and friendship for

Homer, which I have had since I was a child. For of all those beautiful tragic poets he seems c to have been the first teacher and guide. But it would be wrong to honor a man at the expense of truth, and therefore I must, as I said, speak out.

By all means do so.

Listen then, or rather reply.

Ask your questions.

Can you give me any account of the nature of imitation generally? For I assure you I am at a loss myself to understand what it wants to be.

And so you expect me to understand it?

It would not be extraordinary if you did; for it often happens that shortsighted people see things sooner than the sharp-sighted. 596

True, but in your presence, if I did make a discovery, I would not be eager to speak. So look for yourself.

Well, is it your wish that we should pursue our usual course in the outset of our investigation? We have, I believe, been in the habit of positing in each instance some one Form, which includes the numerous particular things to which we apply the same name. Do you understand, or not?

I do understand.

Then let us, on the present occasion, take any one of those numerous things that suits your pleasure. For example, if this instance suits you, b there are, of course, many couches and many tables.

Certainly.

But of ideas in connection with these articles, there are, I believe, only two, one the idea of a couch, and one that of a table.

Yes.

Have we not also been accustomed to say that the craftsman of each of these articles is looking at the idea while he is constructing the couches or the tables which we use, or whatever it may be? For, of course, no craftsman constructs the idea itself, because that is impossible.

Certainly it is.

But how will you describe the following craftsman?

c To whom do you allude?

I refer to the one who makes all the things that each of the manual artisans makes.

You are talking of a marvelously clever man.

Wait a little, and you will have better reasons for saying so. Besides being able to make all manufactured articles, the same artisan makes everything that grows out of the ground, and creates all living things, himself among others; and, in addition to this, heaven and earth and the gods and all the heavenly bodies and everything in Hades under the earth is his workmanship.

d What an extraordinarily adept person you are describing.

You are incredulous, are you? Then tell me: Do you think that the existence of such a craftsman is a complete impossibility? Or do you believe that in one way there could, and in another way there could not, be a maker of such a variety of things? Do you not perceive that, in a way, even you yourself could make this multiplicity of things?

And what is this way? he asked.

e Far from being difficult, I replied, it is something that can be crafted quickly and in many places. Perhaps the quickest way of all would be to take a mirror, and turn it round in every direction. You will not be long in making the sun and the heavenly bodies, nor in making the earth, nor in making yourself, and every other living thing, and all inanimate objects, and plants, and everything that we mentioned just now.

Yes, we can produce so many appearances, but assuredly not truly being things.

Right, and your observation is very much to the point. Now, in my opinion, the painter also belongs to this class of craftsmen. Does he not?

Certainly he does.

But I suppose you will say that all his creations are not true. And yet the painter too, in a way, makes a couch. Or am I wrong?

Yes, the painter too constructs a couch in appearance.

But what of the maker of couches? Did you not say a minute ago, that he did not make the form, which, according to what we have said, is the real couch, but only a particular couch?

Yes, I did say that.

Consequently, if he does not make what really is, must we not say that he does not make what is, but only something like what is, but still unreal? And if anyone were to describe the work of the couch-maker, or of any other artisan, as perfectly real, his account of the matter would be, in all probability, untrue, would it not?

Yes, in the opinion of those who are versed in such discussions as these.

Then let us not be at all surprised at finding that this thing is obscure when contrasted with the truth.

True.

b Should you like us to employ these illustrations in our inquiry into who this imitator is?

If you please, he replied.

Well, here we have three sorts of couches, of which one exists in nature, and this we shall attribute, if I am not mistaken, to the workmanship of god. If not, to whom can we attribute it?

We can attribute it to none other, I think.

The second is made by the carpenter.

Yes.

And the third is the production of the painter. Is it not?

So be it.

Thus we have three forms of couches and three overseers of their manufacture – the painter, the carpenter, and god.

Yes, three.

c Now whether it was that god did not choose to make more than one couch, or that by necessity he was precluded from making more than one in nature, he has at any rate made only one, which is really in itself a couch. But two, or more than two, such couches have not been created by the god, and never will be.

How so?

Because, if the god had made only two, a single couch would again have made its appearance,

whose form would enter into the other two in their turn; and *this* would be that which is a couch, and not the two.

You are right.

d Knowing this, I should suppose, and wishing to be the real maker of the really existing couch, and not a certain indefinite couch-maker, god created a single such couch in nature.

It seems so.

Then are you in favor of our addressing him as the natural maker of this thing or anything else of the sort?

Yes, he replied, it is the just thing to do, seeing that he has made this and everything else by nature.

And what of the carpenter? Is he not the craftsman of the couch?

Yes.

And is the painter the craftsman and maker of this same article?

Certainly not.

Then, by your account, what is he with reference to a couch?

e In my opinion he might most appropriately be styled the imitator of that of which the other two are craftsmen.

Well, then, do you call the creator of that which is twice removed from the natural thing an imitator?

Yes, exactly so.

Hence, since the tragedian is an imitator, we may predicate of him likewise, that he, along with all the other imitators, is twice removed from the king and from truth.

So it would appear.

598 Then we agree about the imitator. But answer me one question about the painter. Do you suppose that a painter attempts to imitate the thing itself in nature, or the productions of the craftsman?

The latter, he replied.

As they really are, or as they appear? Define this further.

What do you mean?

I mean this: When you look at a couch sideways, or in front, or from any other position whatever, does it alter its identity at all, or does it continue really the same, though it appears changed? And so of everything else?

The latter is the true account; it appears different, but it is not really changed.

Now this is the point which I wish you to consider. To which of the two is painting, in every instance, directed? Does it study to imitate the real nature of real objects? Or the apparent nature of appearances? In other words, is it an imitation of a phantasm, or of truth?

Of the former, he replied.

The imitative art, then, is, I conceive, far from the truth; and, apparently, it is enabled to bring about so much, because it only seizes upon an object in a small part of its extent, and that small part is itself only an image. For example, we say the painter will paint us a shoemaker, a carpenter, or any other craftsman, without knowing anything about their trades; and, notwithstanding c this ignorance on his part, let him be but a good painter, and if he paints a carpenter and displays his picture at a distance, he will deceive children and silly people by making them think that it really is a carpenter.

No doubt he will.

Be that as it may, I will tell you, my friend, what we should bear in mind in all such cases. Whenever a person tells us that he has fallen in with a man who is acquainted with all the crafts, and who sums up in his own person all the knowledge possessed by other people singly, to a d degree of accuracy which no one can surpass – we must reply to our informant, that he is a silly fellow, and has, apparently, fallen in with a juggler and mimic, whom he has been deceived into thinking omniscient, because he was himself incapable of discriminating between knowledge and lack of knowledge, and imitation.

That is most true.

And now, I continued, we must proceed to consider the case of tragedy and its leader, Homer, because we are told by some persons that dramatic poets are acquainted not only with all arts, e but with all things human which bear upon virtue and vice, and also with things divine. For, to write well, a good poet must, they say, possess a knowledge of his subject, or else he could not write at all. Hence we must inquire, whether the poets, whom these people have encountered, are mere imitators, who have so far imposed upon the spectators, that, when they behold their performances, they fail to perceive that these productions are twice removed from reality, and easily made by a person unacquainted with the truth, because they are phantoms, and not realities – or

whether our informants are to this extent right, that good poets do really know the subjects about which they seem to the multitude to speak well.

Yes, we must by all means investigate the matter.

Well then, do you think, that, if a man could produce both the original and the image, he would give himself up seriously to the manufacture of the images, and make this the object of his life as the best thing he has?

I do not think so.

On the contrary, if he were truly a knower of the things which he imitates, he would, I imagine, bestow far more industry upon deeds than upon the imitations, and he would endeavor to leave behind him a number of beautiful works, as memorials to himself, and would be more anxious to be praised in song than to be the singer of praise.

I agree with you, said he; for the honor and the benefit are much greater in the one case than in the other.

Now, on ordinary subjects, let us not demand an explanation from Homer or any other poet – asking why, if any of the ancient or modern poets were adepts in the healing art and not mere imitators of the physician's language, they have not the credit of having offered any cures like Asclepius, or of having left behind them students of the physician's art, as Asclepius left his descendants.¹ Nor let us question them concerning the other arts, which may be dismissed from the discussion. But concerning those grandest and most beautiful subjects which Homer undertakes to treat – such as war, and the conduct of campaigns, and the governance of cities, and the education of human beings – it is surely just to institute an inquiry, and ask the question, thus: 'My dear Homer, if you are not really twice removed from the truth, with respect to virtue, but only once removed, and the craftsman of images, according to our definition of an imitator, and you are able to distinguish between the pursuits which make men better or worse, in private and in public, tell us, what city has a better constitution thanks to you, as Lacedaemon owes hers to Lycurgus, and as many cities, great and small, owe theirs to many other legislators? What city attributes to you the benefits derived from a good code of laws? Italy and Sicily recognize Charondas in this capacity, and we Solon.² But

what city recognizes you? Will he be able to mention any?

I think not, replied Glaucon; at least we are not told any tale of the kind even by the very poets who claim him as their ancestor.

Well then, does the story go that any war in Homer's time was brought to a happy termination under his command, or by his advice?

No, not one.

Well, is he said to have been, like Thales the Milesian and Anacharsis the Scythian, the author of a number of ingenious inventions, bearing upon the useful arts or other practical matters, which would convey the impression of his having been a man of wisdom in the active duties of life?³

No, certainly nothing of the sort is said of him.

Well then, is it reported of Homer that, though not a public man, during his lifetime he nevertheless conducted, in private, the education of certain disciples, who used to delight in his society, and handed down to posterity an Homeric way of living, just as Pythagoras was in an extraordinary degree beloved personally as a companion, not to mention that his successors, who to this day call their mode of living by his name, are considered to a certain extent outstanding young men?⁴

No, Socrates, nothing of this kind is reported of him either. Indeed, if the stories about Homer are true, the education of his friend Creophylus might possibly be thought even more ridiculous than his name. For we are told that even Creophylus grossly neglected Homer during his life-time.

No doubt that is the story. But do you suppose, Glaucon, that, if Homer had been really able to educate men and make them better, from the fact of being capable not merely of imitating but of knowing the subjects in question, he could have failed to attract to his side a multitude of companions, who would have loved and honored him? For so long as Protagoras of Abdera, and Prodicus of Ceos, and a host of other persons,⁵ can, as we see, persuade the men of their day by private intercourse, that they will be incapable of managing their own house and city, unless they oversee their education; and so long as the wisdom, implied in this, insures to these teachers an affection so unbounded, that they are almost carried about on the shoulders of their companions. Is it conceivable that, if Homer and Hesiod

were really capable of improving men in virtue, they should have been allowed by their contemporaries to travel around reciting? Is it not more likely that they would have been hugged more closely than gold, and constrained to stay at home with their countrymen? Or else, if this favor were refused, that they would have been escorted in their wanderings, until their disciples had received a satisfactory education?

I believe you are unquestionably right, Socrates.

Then must we not conclude that all writers of poetry, beginning with Homer, imitate phantoms of every subject about which they write, including virtue, and do not grasp the truth? In fact, as we were saying just now, will not the painter, without understanding anything about shoemaking, paint what will be taken for a shoemaker by those who are as ignorant on the subject as himself, and who judge by the colors and shapes?

Yes, certainly he will.

And just in the same way, I think, we shall assert that the poet colors things, using names and phrases, to represent the several professions, of which he only understands enough to be able to imitate them; so that if he writes in meter, rhythm, and harmony, about shoemaking, or about generalship, or about any subject whatever, people who are as ignorant as himself, and who judge merely whether it appears to be well-said, look upon his poetry as very excellent. So powerful is the charm which these things naturally possess. For I suppose you know what a poor appearance the works of poets present, when they have been stripped of their musical coloring, and are rehearsed in their proper nakedness. Doubtless you have observed the fact.

Yes, I have, he replied.

Does it not remind one of the withered appearance of the faces of those who in their youth were blooming without being beautiful, whenever their bloom deserted them?

Precisely so.

Now let me ask you to examine the following point. According to us, the maker of the image, that is, the imitator, understands only the appearance and not what is. Is it not so?

Yes.

Do not let us leave the matter half explained, but let us examine it satisfactorily.

Proceed.

A painter, by our account, will paint a bit and bridle, will he not?

Yes.

But the bridle and bit will be made by the saddler and the smith, will they not?

Certainly.

Then does the painter understand how the bit and bridle ought to be shaped? Or is it the case, that even the makers, the smith and the saddler, are ignorant on this subject, which is only understood by the rider, who knows how to use the things in question?

That is the true state of the case.

Then may we not assert that all things are in the same predicament?

What do you mean?

May we not assert that each single thing involves three particular arts – the province of the first being to use the thing, of the second to make it, of the third to imitate it?

Yes, we may.

Are not virtue, beauty, and correctness of every manufactured article, or living creature, or action, related to nothing else but the use for which each was made or naturally came to be?

True, they are.

Hence the man who makes use of a thing must necessarily be most experienced with it, and must in the course of using it keep the maker informed as to the success or failure of its performances. For example, a flute player, no doubt, informs a flute maker about the flutes which he employs in the exercise of his art, and will direct him how they ought to be made, and the flute maker will submit to his directions.

Of course.

The one has a thorough acquaintance with good and bad flutes, and conveys information, upon which the other relies, and will make them accordingly, is not that the case?

Yes, it is.

Hence, the maker of the instrument will entertain a correct belief with regard to its beauty or badness, by communicating with the person who knows the subject, and by being compelled to listen to his instructions; whereas the user of the same instrument will possess knowledge on these points.

Exactly so.

But which of the two will the imitator possess? Will he, by actually using the things he describes,

know whether his productions are beautiful and right, or not? Or will he entertain correct opinion, on account of being compelled to be with the one who knows and submit to his directions as to the style in which he ought to work?

Neither.

That is to say, the imitator will neither know, nor entertain correct opinions with reference to the beauty or badness of the things which he imitates.

It seems not.

The imitator in his making will be charmingly wise about that which he treats.

Not exactly.

b However, he will go on imitating, notwithstanding his being thoroughly ignorant as to the way in which a thing is good or bad. Apparently he will copy beauty as it appears to the many who do not know.

Yes, what else can he copy?

Then, to all appearance, we are pretty well agreed so far as this, that the imitator knows nothing of importance about the things which he imitates, and that therefore imitation is a kind of play and not a serious business; and that those who cultivate tragic poetry in iambic or in epic verse are without exception in the highest possible degree imitators.

Exactly so.

c Then, in the name of Zeus, I continued, does not this process of imitation deal with something twice removed from the truth? Answer me.

It does.

But how do you describe that part of human nature on which it exercises the power which it possesses?

Explain what part you mean.

I will. Objects of the same size, I believe, appear to us as not being equal, depending on their distance from our eyes.

They do.

d And things which look bent under water appear straight when taken out of the water; and the same objects look either concave or convex, owing to mistakes of another kind about colors to which the eye is liable; and clearly there exists in the soul a kind of utter confusion of this sort. And it is just this natural condition of ours which is taken advantage of by the art of shadow-painting, as well as by puppetry and the numer-

ous other tricks of the same sort, with every species of witchcraft.

True.

And have not the processes of measuring and counting and weighing made their appearance most agreeably to aid us in dispelling these cases, so that we are not ruled by things as they appear to us greater or smaller, or more or heavier, but by that which has been calculated, or measured, or weighed?

Undoubtedly.

And surely this must be the work of the rational part in the soul. e

Yes, certainly it must.

But when this part, after frequent measuring, informs us that one thing is greater or less than, or equal to, another thing, it is contradicted at the same moment by the appearance which the same things present.

Yes.

Did we not assert the impossibility of entertaining, at the same time and with the same part of us, contradictory opinions with reference to the same things?

Yes, and we were right in asserting it.

Then that part of the soul whose opinion runs counter to the measurements cannot be identical with that part which agrees with them. 603

Certainly not.

But surely that part, which trusts measurement and calculation, must be the best part of the soul.

Doubtless it must.

Hence, that which contradicts this part must be one of the inferior elements of our nature.

Necessarily so.

This was the point which I wished to settle between us, when I said that painting, or to speak generally, the whole art of imitation, is busy about a work which is far removed from truth; and that it associates moreover with that part of us, which is far removed from prudence, and is its mistress and friend for no healthy or true purpose. b

Unquestionably.

Thus the art of imitation is the inferior mistress of an inferior friend, and the parent of an inferior progeny.

So it seems.

Does this apply only to the imitation which addresses itself to the eye? Or may we extend it

to that which addresses itself to the ear, which I believe we name poetry?

Probably we may.

c Well, I proceeded, do not let us rely only on the probable evidence derived from painting, but let us direct further inquiries into that very part of the reasoning, with which the imitative art of poetry associates, and let us examine whether it is inferior or serious.

Yes, we ought to do so.

Let us state the case thus. The imitative art, if we are right, imitates men who are engaged in voluntary or involuntary actions, and who, according to the result of their actions, think themselves well off or the reverse; and who, in the midst of all these circumstances, are conscious either of joy or of grief. Is there anything to be added to this?

No, nothing.

d Now, in this variety of circumstances, is a human being of one mind? Or is he at feud and war with himself in his actions, just as he was at feud and entertained contradictory opinions at the same moment about the same subjects, where his sight was concerned? But I remember, that on this subject we need not come to an agreement now; for we settled all this satisfactorily in the past conversations, in which we admitted that our soul is filled with a myriad of these simultaneous contradictions.

We were right.

e Yes, we were, I continued. But there was something then omitted, which I think it is now necessary to discuss.

What was that?

We said, I believe, at the time, that a decent man, if he meet with a misfortune, like that of losing a son or anything else that he values most highly, will bear it more easily than other men.

Certainly he will.

But now, let us further examine, whether he will feel no sorrow at all, or whether, this being impossible, he will observe some kind of moderation in grief.

The latter is the truer account.

604 Now let me ask you a question about him. Do you think he will fight against his grief and resist it most, when the eyes of his peers are upon him, or when he is alone by himself in solitude?

He will do so much more, I imagine, when he is observed.

But when he is alone, I think, he will venture to say much, which he would be ashamed to say in the hearing of another person, and he will do much, which he would not like anyone to see him doing.

Just so.

Now that which urges him to resist his grief is reason and law, is it not? And that which prompts him to indulge in the pain is the suffering itself?

True.

But when there are two opposite attractions in a man at the same time in reference to the same thing, he must, as we said, be a double man.

Of course he must.

Is not one part of him prepared to obey the directions of law?

What are they?

The law, I believe, tells him that it is best to keep as quiet as possible in misfortunes, and not to become irritated, because we cannot estimate the amount of good and bad contained in these sorts of things, and at the same time taking it badly does not help us forwards; and because c none of the human things is to be valued very earnestly while grief stands in the way of that behavior which we ought to adopt in our troubles without a moment's delay.

To what do you refer?

It is our duty to think over the event that has taken place, and to arrange our affairs to take the way which reason pronounces best, like the player who moves his pieces according to the dice which he has thrown. And, instead of hugging the wounded part, like children after a fall who continue to cry, we ought ever to habituate the soul d to turn with all speed to the task of healing and righting the fallen and diseased part, thus putting a stop to lamentation by the aid of medicine.

Certainly that would be the best way to meet what chance brings.

Then the better part of us, we say, consents to be led by such calculation.

Obviously it does.

On the other hand, shall we not maintain, that the part which prompts us to think of, and grieve over, our suffering, and which has an insatiable appetite for lamentations, is irrational and idle, and the friend of cowardice?

Certainly we shall.

This being the case, the irritable character furnishes a great variety of materials for imitation; e

whereas the prudent and calm character is so constantly uniform and unchanging, that it is not easily imitated; and, when imitated, it is not easily understood, especially by a general gathering of all sorts of persons, collected in a theater. For these people witness the imitation of an affection, which, if I am not mistaken, is far from being their own.

605 It is, unquestionably.

Hence it is clear, that the imitative poet has, in the nature of things, nothing to do with any such part of the soul, and that his wisdom is not set on pleasing it, if he intends to gain a good reputation with the many. But his business is with the irritable and changeable character, because it is easily imitated.

That is clear.

Then we shall be justified now in laying hands on him, and taking him as a counterpart to the painter. For he resembles the painter in producing things that are inferior when tried by the standard of truth; and he resembles him also in this, that he holds intercourse with a part of the soul which is like himself, and not with the best part. And, this being the case, we shall henceforth be justified in refusing to admit him into a city that is going to be well-governed, because he excites and feeds and strengthens this worthless part of the soul, and thus destroys the rational part – like a person who should strengthen the hands of the wicked members of a city and give over to them supreme power, and at the same time ruin the better sort. In the same way we shall assert that the imitative poet implants a bad constitution in the soul of each individual, by gratifying that unthinking part which, instead of distinguishing the greater from the less, regards the same things now as great, and now as small, and manufactures fantastic phantoms that are very widely removed from truth.

Exactly so.

But still, I continued, we have not yet brought forward the heaviest charge in our indictment. For that poetry should be able to damage decent men, except for a few, is, I conceive, most dreadful.

Undoubtedly it is, if it really does that.

Listen, and then judge. The best of us, I believe – while listening to the passages in which Homer or one of the tragedians represents some suffering hero, who spins out a long speech in his lamentations, or perhaps some persons engaged in

beating their breasts and bemoaning themselves in song – are delighted, as you know, and give ourselves up to be led along, and sympathize with the sufferer, and earnestly praise as a good poet the writer who can bring us as much as possible into such a state.

I know it, of course.

But, on the other hand, whenever sorrow comes home to one of us, you are aware that we pride ourselves upon the opposite conduct – that is, we glory in being able to endure with calmness, because, in our estimation, this behavior is manly, while the other which we praised before is womanish.

I am aware of it, he said.

Then is this praise rightly bestowed? I mean, is it right to feel pleasure and bestow praise, instead of being disgusted, when one sees a man behaving as one would scorn and blush to behave oneself?

No, by Zeus, he replied, this does not seem reasonable.

It does not, said I, if you look at it in another light. 606

In what light?

If you consider that the part which is forcibly held down when those misfortunes of our own occur, and which has hungered for the privilege of weeping and bewailing itself fully and without holding back, because it is its nature to desire this satisfaction – is the very part that is fed to satiety by the poets, and delights in those descriptions. Meanwhile, that part of us which is naturally the best, from not having been sufficiently trained by reason and by habit, relaxes in its watch over this mournful part, because it is surveying the afflictions of others, and because it is not shameful for it to praise and pity another man, who professes to be good, though his grief is ill-timed. In fact, it looks upon the pleasure to be as much gained, and will not allow itself to be deprived of it by a contempt for the whole poem. For it is given, I think, only to a few to figure out that the conduct of other people must necessarily influence our own, and that it is no easy matter, after feeding the strength of the principle of pity upon the sufferings of others, to keep it under restraint when we suffer ourselves.

That is most true.

Does not the same reasoning apply also to the laughing part, to jokes which you would yourself

be ashamed to make, but which in comic imitation, or even in private life, you will be very well pleased to hear, and will not hate as wicked – acting in this just as you acted in your pity? For on such occasions you give the rein to that element, which, in your own case, you check by reason, when it wants to create laughter, because you dread the reputation of a buffoon; and, thus letting it have its own way, you have often, in your own conduct, been unconsciously seduced into adopting the character of a comic poet.

Very true.

d And in the case of sex and spiritedness, and all desire, pains, and pleasure in the soul, which we hold to accompany all our actions, is it not true that poetic imitation works upon us similar effects? For it waters and cherishes these emotions, which ought to wither with drought, and constitutes them our rulers, when they ought to be our subjects, if we wish to become better and happier instead of worse and more miserable.

I cannot deny it.

e Then, Glaucon, whenever you meet with those who praise Homer, who tell you that he has educated Greece, and that he deserves to be taken up and studied with an eye to the administration and guidance of human affairs, and that a man ought
607 to regulate his whole life by this poet's directions, it will be your duty to greet them affectionately as excellent men doing their best, and to admit that Homer is first and greatest among tragic poets; but you must not forget that, with the single exception of hymns to the gods and panegyrics on the good, no poetry ought to be admitted into a city. For if you determine to admit the highly-seasoned Muse of lyric or epic poetry, pleasure and pain will have sovereign power in your city, instead of law and reason, which is always thought in common to be best.

That is perfectly true.

b Having returned to the subject of poetry, I continued, let this defense serve to show the reasonableness of our former judgment in banishing from our state a pursuit which has the tendencies we have described. For, in doing so, we were yielding to reason. But that poetry may not charge us with being, to a certain extent, harsh and rough, let us address her and say, that there is an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry, for those lines.

That yelping bitch, which at its master barks,

and,

Mighty he is in the vain talk of fools,

and,

The lordly mob of god-wise folks,

and,

Poor are those subtle thinkers,

and a thousand others, are marks of an old antagonism between the two. But nevertheless let us admit, that, if the poetry whose end is to please, and imitation, can give any reasons to show that they ought to exist in a well-ordered city, we for our part will gladly welcome them home again. For we are conscious of being enchanted by such poetry ourselves, though it would not be holy to betray what seems to us the cause of truth. Am I
d not right in supposing that you, my friend, are enchanted by poetry, especially when you contemplate it under Homer's guidance?

Yes, I am, powerfully.

Then is it not just for poetry to return from exile, when she has made her defense either in lyrical or in some other meter?

Certainly it is.

And I suppose we shall also allow those of her patrons who are lovers of poetry without being poets, to advocate her cause in prose by maintaining that poetry is not only pleasurable, but also beneficial in its bearings upon governments, and upon human life. And we shall listen
e favorably, for we shall be gainers, I presume, if poetry can be proved to be beneficial as well as pleasurable.

Undoubtedly we shall be gainers.

But if not, why in that case, my dear friend, we must take a lesson from those persons who, after falling in love with someone, deny their passion at any cost, if they think it injurious. For though the love of such poetry which has grown up in us under the training of our beautiful constitution,
608 will make us cordially desirous that it should appear the best and the truest. Still, so long as it is unable to make good its defense we shall protect ourselves, as we listen, by inwardly repeating, like

a charm, the argument which we have just brought to a close, and we shall be on our guard against falling anew into that childish passion, which most people acknowledge. At any rate, we have learned that we must not make a serious pursuit of such poetry, in the belief that it grasps truth. On the contrary, the listener, apprehending danger to the constitution within him, is bound to be on his guard against it, and to adopt the opinion which we have expressed on the subject.

I thoroughly agree with you.

Indeed, my dear Glaucon, the choice between becoming a good or a bad man involves a great stake – yes, a greater stake than people suppose. Therefore it is wrong to be heedless of justice and the rest of virtue, under the excitement of honor, or wealth, or power, or even of poetry.

I agree with you, he replied, at the conclusion of our inquiry, and I fancy every one else will do the same.

Translator's Notes

- 1 Asclepius is the traditional god of medicine or founder of medicine and medical training.
- 2 Lycurgus was the traditional lawgiver of Sparta (ca. 775 BCE); Charondas (sixth century) of Catana and other Sicilian cities. Solon's constitution for Athens was agreed to in 594 BCE.
- 3 Thales and Anacharsis were philosophers of the early sixth century BCE.
- 4 Pythagoras (ca. 582–500 BCE) was a mathematician-philosopher and founder of the Pythagorean school and movement.
- 5 Protagoras and Prodicus were both fifth-century sophists, traveling teachers around the Greek cities, including Athens.

"Zeus! Not I," I said.

"Well, by calling anyone 'happy,' don't you mean they possess good and beautiful things?"

d "Certainly."

"What about Love? You agreed he needs good and beautiful things, and that's why he desires them – because he needs them."

"I certainly did."

"Then how could he be a god if he has no share in good and beautiful things?"

"There's no way he could, apparently."

"Now do you see? You don't believe Love is a god either!"

"Then, what could Love be?" I asked. "A mortal?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, what is he?"

"He's like what we mentioned before," she said. "He is in between mortal and immortal."

"What do you mean, Diotima?"

e "He's a great spirit, Socrates. Everything spiritual, you see, is in between god and mortal."

"What is their function?" I asked.

"They are messengers who shuttle back and forth between the two, conveying prayer and sacrifice from men to gods, while to men they bring commands from the gods and gifts in return for sacrifices. Being in the middle of the two, they round out the whole and bind fast the all to all. Through them all divination passes, through them the art of priests in sacrifice and ritual, in enchantment, prophecy, and sorcery. Gods do not mix with men; they mingle and converse with us through spirits instead, whether we are awake or asleep. He who is wise in any of these ways is a man of the spirit, but he who is wise in any other way, in a profession or any manual work, is merely a mechanic. These spirits are many and various, then, and one of them is Love."

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b "Who are his father and mother?" I asked.

"That's rather a long story," she said. "I'll tell it to you, all the same."

"When Aphrodite was born, the gods held a celebration. Poros, the son of Metis, was there among them.¹ When they had feasted, Penia came begging, as poverty does when there's a party, and stayed by the gates. Now Poros got drunk on nectar (there was no wine yet, you see) and, feeling drowsy, went into the garden of Zeus, where he fell asleep. Then Penia schemed up a plan to relieve her lack of resources: she

c

would get a child from Poros. So she lay beside him and got pregnant with Love. That is why Love was born to follow Aphrodite and serve her: because he was conceived on the day of her birth. And that's why he is also by nature a lover of beauty, because Aphrodite herself is especially beautiful.

"As the son of Poros and Penia, his lot in life is set to be like theirs. In the first place, he is always poor, and he's far from being delicate and beautiful (as ordinary people think he is); instead, he is tough and shriveled and shoeless and homeless, always lying on the dirt without a bed, sleeping at people's doorsteps and in roadsides under the sky, having his mother's nature, always living with Need. But on his father's side he is a schemer after the beautiful and the good; he is brave, impetuous, and intense, an awesome hunter, always weaving snares, resourceful in his pursuit of intelligence, a lover of wisdom² through all his life, a genius with enchantments, potions, and clever pleadings.

d

"He is by nature neither immortal nor mortal. But now he springs to life when he gets his way; now he dies – all in the very same day. Because he is his father's son, however, he keeps coming back to life, but then anything he finds his way to always slips away, and for this reason Love is never completely without resources, nor is he ever rich.

e

"He is in between wisdom and ignorance as well. In fact, you see, none of the gods loves wisdom or wants to become wise – for they are wise – and no one else who is wise already loves wisdom; on the other hand, no one who is ignorant will love wisdom either or want to become wise. For what's especially difficult about being ignorant is that you are content with yourself, even though you're neither beautiful and good nor intelligent. If you don't think you need anything, of course you won't want what you don't think you need."

204

"In that case, Diotima, who *are* the people who love wisdom, if they are neither wise nor ignorant?"

b

"That's obvious," she said. "A child could tell you. Those who love wisdom fall in between those two extremes. And Love is one of them, because he is in love with what is beautiful, and wisdom is extremely beautiful. It follows that Love *must* be a lover of wisdom and, as such, is

in between being wise and being ignorant. This, too, comes to him from his parentage, from a father who is wise and resourceful and a mother who is not wise and lacks resource.

c "My dear Socrates, that, then, is the nature of the Spirit called Love. Considering what you thought about Love, it's no surprise that you were led into thinking of Love as you did. On the basis of what you say, I conclude that you thought Love was *being loved*, rather than *being a lover*. I think that's why Love struck you as beautiful in every way: because it is what is really beautiful and graceful that deserves to be loved, and this is perfect and highly blessed; but being a lover takes a different form, which I have just described."

d So I said, "All right then, my friend. What you say about Love is beautiful, but if you're right, what use is Love to human beings?"

"I'll try to teach you that, Socrates, after I finish this. So far I've been explaining the character and the parentage of Love. Now, according to you, he is love for beautiful things. But suppose someone asks us, 'Socrates and Diotima, what is the point of loving beautiful things?'

"It's clearer this way: 'The lover of beautiful things has a desire; what does he desire?'"

"That they become his own," I said.

"But that answer calls for still another question, that is, 'What will this man have, when the beautiful things he wants have become his own?'"

e I said there was no way I could give a ready answer to that question.

Then she said, "Suppose someone changes the question, putting 'good' in place of 'beautiful,' and asks you this: 'Tell me, Socrates, a lover of good things has a desire; what does he desire?'"

"That they become his own," I said.

"And what will he have, when the good things he wants have become his own?"

205 "This time it's easier to come up with the answer," I said. "He'll have happiness."³

"That's what makes happy people happy, isn't it – possessing good things. There's no need to ask further, 'What's the point of wanting happiness?' The answer you gave seems to be final."

"True," I said.

"Now this desire for happiness, this kind of love – do you think it is common to all human beings and that everyone wants to have good things forever and ever? What would you say?"

"Just that," I said. "It is common to all."

b "Then, Socrates, why don't we say that everyone is in love," she asked, "since everyone always loves the same things? Instead, we say some people are in love and others not; why is that?"

"I wonder about that myself," I said.

"It's nothing to wonder about," she said. "It's because we divide out a special kind of love, and we refer to it by the word that means the whole – 'love'; and for the other kinds of love we use other words."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

c "Well, you know, for example, that 'poetry' has a very wide range.⁴ After all, everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing is a kind of poetry; and so all the creations of every craft and profession are themselves a kind of poetry, and everyone who practices a craft is a poet."

"True."

"Nevertheless," she said, "as you also know, these craftsmen are not called poets. We have other words for them, and out of the whole of poetry we have marked off one part, the part the Muses give us with melody and rhythm, and we refer to this by the word that means the whole. For this alone is called 'poetry,' and those who practice this part of poetry are called poets."

d "True."

"That's also how it is with love. The main point is this: every desire for good things or for happiness is 'the supreme and treacherous love' in everyone. But those who pursue this along any of its many other ways – through making money, or through the love of sports, or through philosophy – we don't say that *these* people are in love, and we don't call them lovers. It's only when people are devoted exclusively to one special kind of love that we use these words that really belong to the whole of it; 'love' and 'in love' and 'lovers.'"

"I am beginning to see your point," I said.

e "Now there is a certain story," she said, "according to which lovers are those people who seek their other halves. But according to my story, a lover does not seek the half or the whole, unless, my friend, it turns out to be good as well. I say this because people are even willing to cut off their own arms and legs if they think they are diseased. I don't think an individual takes joy in what belongs to him personally unless by 'belonging to me' he means 'good' and by 'belonging

206 to another' he means 'bad.' That's because what everyone loves is really nothing other than the good. Do you disagree?"

"Zeus! Not I," I said.

"Now, then," she said. "Can we simply say that people love the good?"

"Yes," I said.

"But shouldn't we add that, in loving it, they want the good to be theirs?"

"We should."

"And not only that," she said. "They want the good to be theirs forever, don't they?"

"We should add that too."

"In a word, then, love is wanting to possess the good forever."

"That's very true," I said.

b "This, then, is the object of love," she said. "Now, how do lovers pursue it? We'd rightly say that when they are in love they do something with eagerness and zeal. But what is it precisely that they do? Can you say?"

"If I could," I said, "I wouldn't be your student, filled with admiration for your wisdom, and trying to learn these very things."

"Well, I'll tell you," she said. "It is giving birth in beauty,⁵ whether in body or in soul."

c "It would take divination to figure out what you mean. I can't."

"Well, I'll tell you more clearly," she said. "All of us are pregnant, Socrates, both in body and in soul, and, as soon as we come to a certain age, we naturally desire to give birth. Now no one can possibly give birth in anything ugly; only in something beautiful. That's because when a man and a woman come together in order to give birth, this is a godly affair. Pregnancy, reproduction – this is an immortal thing for a mortal animal to do, and it cannot occur in anything that is out of harmony, but ugliness is out of harmony with all that is godly. Beauty, however, is in harmony with the divine. Therefore the goddess who presides at childbirth – she's called Moira or Eilithuia – is really Beauty.⁶ That's why, whenever pregnant animals or persons draw near to beauty, they become gentle and joyfully disposed and give birth and reproduce; but near ugliness they are foul-faced and draw back in pain; they turn away and shrink back and do not reproduce, and because they hold on to what they carry inside them, the labor is painful. This is the source of
e the great excitement about beauty that comes to

anyone who is pregnant and already teeming with life: beauty releases them from their great pain. You see, Socrates," she said, "what Love wants is not beauty, as you think it is."

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Reproduction and birth in beauty."

"Maybe," I said.

"Certainly," she said. "Now, why reproduction? It's because reproduction goes on forever; it is what mortals have in place of immortality. A lover must desire immortality along with the good, if what we agreed earlier was right, that Love wants to possess the good forever. It follows from our argument that Love must desire immortality." 207

All this she taught me, on those occasions when she spoke on the art of love. And once she asked, "What do you think causes love and desire, Socrates? Don't you see what an awful state a wild animal is in when it wants to reproduce? Footed and winged animals alike, all are plagued by the disease of Love. First they are sick for intercourse with each other, then for nurturing their young – for their sake the weakest animals stand ready to do battle against the strongest and even to die for them, and they may be racked with famine in order to feed their young. They would do anything for their sake. Human beings, you'd think, would do this because they understand the reason for it; but what causes wild animals to be in such a state of love? Can you say?" b

And I said again that I didn't know.

So she said, "How do you think you'll ever master the art of love, if you don't know that?"

"But that's why I came to you, Diotima, as I just said. I knew I needed a teacher. So tell me what causes this, and everything else that belongs to the art of love." c

"If you really believe that Love by its nature aims at what we have often agreed it does, then don't be surprised at the answer," she said. "For among animals the principle is the same as with us, and mortal nature seeks so far as possible to live forever and be immortal. And this is possible in one way only: by reproduction, because it always leaves behind a new young one in place of the old. Even while each living thing is said to be alive and to be the same – as a person is said to be the same from childhood till he turns into an old man – even then he never consists of the same things, though he is called the same, but he is d

e always being renewed and in other respects
 passing away, in his hair and flesh and bones and
 blood and his entire body. And it's not just in his
 body, but in his soul, too, for none of his manners,
 customs, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, or
 fears ever remains the same, but some are coming
 to be in him while others are passing away. And
 what is still far stranger than that is that not only
 208 does one branch of knowledge come to be in us
 while another passes away and that we are never
 the same even in respect of our knowledge, but
 that each single piece of knowledge has the same
 fate. For what we call *studying* exists because
 knowledge is leaving us, because forgetting is the
 departure of knowledge, while studying puts back
 a fresh memory in place of what went away,
 thereby preserving a piece of knowledge, so that
 it seems to be the same. And in that way every-
 b thing mortal is preserved, not, like the divine, by
 always being the same in every way, but because
 what is departing and aging leaves behind some-
 thing new, something such as it had been. By this
 device, Socrates," she said, "what is mortal shares
 in immortality, whether it is a body or anything
 else, while the immortal has another way. So
 don't be surprised if everything naturally values
 its own offspring, because it is for the sake of
 immortality that everything shows this zeal,
 which is Love."

c Yet when I heard her speech I was amazed, and
 spoke: "Well," said I, "Most wise Diotima, is this
 really the way it is?"

And in the manner of a perfect sophist she
 said, "Be sure of it, Socrates. Look, if you will, at
 how human beings seek honor. You'd be amazed
 at their irrationality, if you didn't have in mind
 what I spoke about and if you hadn't pondered
 the awful state of love they're in, wanting to
 become famous and 'to lay up glory immortal
 forever,' and how they're ready to brave any
 danger for the sake of this, much more than they
 are for their children; and they are prepared to
 d spend money, suffer through all sorts of ordeals,
 and even die for the sake of glory. Do you really
 think that Alcestis would have died for Admetus,"
 she asked, "or that Achilles would have died after
 Patroclus, or that your Codrus would have died
 so as to preserve the throne for his sons,⁷ if they
 hadn't expected the memory of their virtue –
 which we still hold in honor – to be immortal?
 Far from it," she said. "I believe that anyone will

e do anything for the sake of immortal virtue and
 the glorious fame that follows; and the better the
 people, the more they will do, for they are all in
 love with immortality.

"Now, some people are pregnant in body, and
 for this reason turn more to women and pursue
 love in that way, providing themselves through
 childbirth with immortality and remembrance
 and happiness, as they think, for all time to come;
 209 while others are pregnant in soul – because there
 surely *are* those who are even more pregnant in
 their souls than in their bodies, and these are
 pregnant with what is fitting for a soul to bear
 and bring to birth. And what is fitting? Wisdom
 and the rest of virtue, which all poets beget, as
 well as all the craftsmen who are said to be cre-
 ative. But by far the greatest and most beautiful
 part of wisdom deals with the proper ordering of
 cities and households, and that is called modera-
 tion and justice. When someone has been preg-
 nant with these in his soul from early youth,
 while he is still a virgin, and, having arrived at the
 proper age, desires to beget and give birth, he
 too will certainly go about seeking the beauty
 in which he would beget; for he will never beget
 in anything ugly. Since he is pregnant, then, he is
 much more drawn to bodies that are beautiful
 than to those that are ugly; and if he also has the
 luck to find a soul that is beautiful and noble and
 well-formed, he is even more drawn to this com-
 bination; such a man makes him instantly teem
 with ideas and arguments about virtue – the
 qualities a virtuous man should have and the cus-
 tomary activities in which he should engage; and
 so he tries to educate him. In my view, you see,
 when he makes contact with someone beautiful
 and keeps company with him, he conceives and
 gives birth to what he has been carrying inside
 him for ages. And whether they are together or
 apart, he remembers that beauty. And in common
 with him he nurtures the newborn; such people,
 therefore, have much more to share than do the
 parents of human children, and have a firmer
 bond of friendship, because the children in whom
 they have a share are more beautiful and more
 d immortal. Everyone would rather have such
 children than human ones, and would look up to
 Homer, Hesiod, and the other good poets with
 envy and admiration for the offspring they have
 left behind – offspring, which, because they are
 immortal themselves, provide their parents with

immortal glory and remembrance. "For example," she said, "those are the sort of children Lycurgus⁸ left behind in Sparta as the saviors of Sparta and virtually all of Greece. Among you the honor goes to Solon for his creation of your laws. Other men in other places everywhere Greek or barbarian, have brought a host of beautiful deeds into the light and begotten every kind of virtue. Already many shrines have sprung up to honor them for their immortal children, which hasn't happened yet to anyone for human offspring.

"Even you, Socrates, could probably come to be initiated into these rites of love. But as for the purpose of these rites when they are done correctly – that is the final and highest mystery, and I don't know if you are capable of it. I myself will tell you," she said, "and I won't stint any effort. And you must try to follow if you can."

"A lover who goes about this matter correctly must begin in his youth to devote himself to beautiful bodies. First, if the leader⁹ leads aright, he should love one body and beget beautiful ideas there; then he should realize that the beauty of any one body is brother to the beauty of any other and that if he is to pursue beauty of form he'd be very foolish not to think that the beauty of all bodies is one and the same. When he grasps this, he must become a lover of all beautiful bodies, and he must think that this wild gaping after just one body is a small thing and despise it.

"After this he must think that the beauty of people's souls is more valuable than the beauty of their bodies, so that if someone is decent in his soul, even though he is scarcely blooming in his body, our lover must be content to love and care for him and to seek to give birth to such ideas as will make young men better. The result is that our lover will be forced to gaze at the beauty of activities and laws and to see that all this is akin to itself, with the result that he will think that the beauty of bodies is a thing of no importance. After customs he must move on to various kinds of knowledge. The result is that he will see the beauty of knowledge and be looking mainly not at beauty in a single example – as a servant would who favored the beauty of a little boy or a man or a single custom (being a slave, of course, he's low and small-minded) – but the lover is turned to the great sea of beauty, and, gazing upon this, he gives birth to many gloriously beautiful ideas and theories, in unstinting love of wisdom,¹⁰

until, having grown and been strengthened there, he catches sight of such knowledge, and it is the knowledge of such beauty . . .

"Try to pay attention to me," she said, "as best you can. You see, the man who has been thus far guided in matters of Love, who has beheld beautiful things in the right order and correctly, is coming now to the goal of Loving: all of a sudden he will catch sight of something wonderfully beautiful in its nature; that, Socrates, is the reason for all his earlier labors:

"First, it always *is* and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes. Second, it is not beautiful this way and ugly that way, nor beautiful at one time and ugly at another, nor beautiful in relation to one thing and ugly in relation to another; nor is it beautiful here but ugly there, as it would be if it were beautiful for some people and ugly for others. Nor will the beautiful appear to him in the guise of a face or hands or anything else that belongs to the body. It will not appear to him as one idea or one kind of knowledge. It is not anywhere in another thing, as in an animal, or in earth, or in heaven, or in anything else, but itself by itself with itself, it is always one in form; and all the other beautiful things share in that, in such a way that when those others come to be or pass away, this does not become the least bit smaller or greater nor suffer any change. So when someone rises by these stages, through loving boys correctly, and begins to see this beauty, he has almost grasped his goal. This is what it is to go aright, or be led by another, into the mystery of Love: one goes always upwards for the sake of this Beauty, starting out from beautiful things and using them like rising stairs: from one body to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, then from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs, and from customs to learning beautiful things, and from these lessons he arrives in the end at this lesson, which is learning of this very Beauty, so that in the end he comes to know just what it is to be beautiful.

"And there in life, Socrates, my friend," said the woman from Mantinea, "there if anywhere should a person live his life, beholding that Beauty. If you once see that, it won't occur to you to measure beauty by gold or clothing or beautiful boys and youths – who, if you see them now, strike you out of your senses, and make you, you and many others, eager to be with the boys

you love and look at them forever, if there were any way to do that, forgetting food and drink, everything but looking at them and being with them. But how would it be, in our view,” she said, “if someone got to see the Beautiful itself, absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colors or any other great nonsense of mortality, but if he could see the divine Beauty itself in its one form? Do you think it would be a poor life for a human being to look there and to behold it by that which he ought, and to be with it? Or haven’t you remembered,” she said, “that in that life alone, when he looks at Beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen – only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he’s in touch with no images), but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true Beauty). The love of the gods belongs to anyone who has given birth to true virtue and nourished it, and if any human being could become immortal, it would be he.”

Translator’s Notes

- 1 *Poros* means “way,” “resource.” His mother’s name, *Mētis*, means “cunning.” *Penia* means “poverty.”

- 2 I.e., a philosopher.
 3 *Eudaimonia*: no English word catches the full range of this term, which is used for the whole of well-being and the good, flourishing life.
 4 “Poetry” translates *poiēsis*, lit. ‘making’, which can be used for any kind of production or creation. However, the word *poiētēs*, lit. ‘maker’, was used mainly for poets – writers of metrical verses that were actually set to music.
 5 The preposition is ambiguous between “within” and “in the presence of.” Diotima may mean that the lover causes the newborn (which may be an idea) to come to be within a beautiful person; or she may mean that he is stimulated to give birth to it in the presence of a beautiful person.
 6 Moira is known mainly as a Fate, but she was also a birth-goddess (*Iliad* xxiv.209), and was identified with the birth-goddess Eilithuia (Pindar, *Olympian Odes* vi.42, *Nemean Odes* vii.1).
 7 Codrus was the legendary last king of Athens. He gave his life to satisfy a prophecy that promised victory to Athens and salvation from the invading Dorians if their king was killed by the enemy.
 8 Lycurgus was supposed to have been the founder of the oligarchic laws and stern customs of Sparta.
 9 The leader: Love.
 10 I.e., philosophy.

Poetics

Aristotle

Aristotle (384–322 BCE), a student of Plato, had an enormous impact on the development of Western thought, not only in all the branches of philosophy but also in biology, psychology, zoology, meteorology, and astronomy.

^{1447a} 1 Our subject being Poetry, I propose to speak not only of the art in general but also of its species and their respective capacities; of the structure of plot required for a good poem; of the number and nature of the constituent parts of a poem; and likewise of any other matters in the same line of inquiry. Let us follow the natural order and begin with the primary facts.

Epic poetry and Tragedy, as also Comedy, Dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and lyre-playing, are all, viewed as a whole, modes of imitation. But at the same time they differ from one another in three ways, either by a difference of kind in their means, or by differences in the objects, or in the manner of their imitations.

I. Just as colour and form are used as means by some, who (whether by art or constant practice) imitate and portray many things by their aid, and the voice is used by others; so also in the above-mentioned group of arts, the means with them as a whole are rhythm, language, and harmony – used, however, either singly or in certain combinations. A combination of harmony and rhythm alone is the means in flute-playing

and lyre-playing, and any other arts there may be of the same description, e.g. imitative piping. Rhythm alone, without harmony, is the means in the dancer's imitations; for even he, by the rhythms of his attitudes, may represent men's characters, as well as what they do and suffer. There is further an art which imitates by language alone, without harmony, in prose or in verse, and if in verse, either in some one or in a plurality of metres. This form of imitation is to this day without a name. We have no common name for a mime of Sophron or Xenarchus and a Socratic Conversation; and we should still be without one even if the imitation in the two instances were in trimeters or elegiacs or some other kind of verse – though it is the way with people to take on 'poet' to the name of a metre, and talk of elegiac-poets and epic-poets, thinking that they call them poets not by reason of the imitative nature of their work, but indiscriminately by reason of the metre they write in. Even if a theory of medicine or physical philosophy be put forth in a metrical form, it is usual to describe the writer in this way; Homer and Empedocles, however, have really nothing in common apart from their metre; so that, if the one is to be called a poet, the other should be termed a physicist rather than a poet. We should be in the same position also, if the

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imitation in these instances were in all the metres, like the *Centaur* (a rhapsody in a medley of all metres) of Chaeremon; and Chaeremon one has to recognize as a poet. So much, then, as to these arts. There are, lastly, certain other arts, which combine all the means enumerated, rhythm, melody, and verse, e.g. Dithyrambic and Nomic poetry, Tragedy and Comedy; with this difference, however, that the three kinds of means are in some of them employed together, and in others brought in separately, one after the other. These elements of difference in the above arts I term the means of their imitation.

1448^a 2 II. The objects the imitator represents are actions, with agents who are necessarily either good men or bad – the diversities of human character being nearly always derivative from this primary distinction, since the line between virtue and vice is one dividing the whole of mankind. It follows, therefore, that the agents represented must be either above our own level of goodness, or beneath it, or just such as we are; in the same way as, with the painters, the personages of Polygnotus are better than we are, those of Pauson worse, and those of Dionysius just like ourselves. It is clear that each of the above-mentioned arts will admit of these differences, and that it will become a separate art by representing objects with this point of difference. Even in dancing, flute-playing, and lyre-playing such diversities are possible; and they are also possible in the nameless art that uses language, prose or verse without harmony, as its means; Homer's personages, for instance, are better than we are; Cleophon's are on our own level; and those of Hegemon of Thasos, the first writer of parodies, and Nicocharas, the author of the *Diliad*, are beneath it. The same is true of the Dithyramb and the Nome: the personages may be presented in them with the difference exemplified in the . . . of . . . and Argas, and in the Cyclopes of Timotheus and Philoxenus. This difference it is that distinguishes Tragedy and Comedy also; the one would make its personages worse, and the other better, than the men of the present day.

3 III. A third difference in these arts is in the manner in which each kind of object is represented. Given both the same means and the same kind of object for imitation, one may either

(1) speak at one moment in narrative and at another in an assumed character, as Homer does; or (2) one may remain the same throughout, without any such change; or (3) the imitators may represent the whole story dramatically, as though they were actually doing the things described.

As we said at the beginning, therefore, the differences in the imitation of these arts come under three heads, their means, their objects, and their manner.

So that as an imitator Sophocles will be on one side akin to Homer, both portraying good men; and on another to Aristophanes, since both present their personages as acting and doing. This in fact, according to some, is the reason for plays being termed dramas, because in a play the personages act the story. Hence too both Tragedy and Comedy are claimed by the Dorians as their discoveries; Comedy by the Megarians – by those in Greece as having arisen when Megara became a democracy, and by the Sicilian Megarians on the ground that the poet Epicharmus was of their country, and a good deal earlier than Chionides and Magnes; even Tragedy also is claimed by certain of the Peloponnesian Dorians. In support of this claim they point to the words 'comedy' and 'drama'. Their word for the outlying hamlets, they say, is *comae*, whereas Athenians call them *demes* – thus assuming that comedians got the name not from their *comoe* or revels, but from their strolling from hamlet to hamlet, lack of appreciation keeping them out of the city. Their word also for 'to act', they say, is *dran*, whereas Athenians use *prattein*.

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So much, then, as to the number and nature of the points of difference in the imitation of these arts.

4 It is clear that the general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature. Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation. The truth of this second point is shown by experience: though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies. The explanation is to be found in

a further fact: to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it; the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning – gathering the meaning of things, e.g. that the man there is so-and-so; for if one has not seen the thing before, one's pleasure will not be in the picture as an imitation of it, but will be due to the execution or colouring or some similar cause. Imitation, then, being natural to us – as also the sense of harmony and rhythm, the metres being obviously species of rhythms – it was through their original aptitude, and by a series of improvements for the most part gradual on their first efforts, that they created poetry out of their improvisations.

Poetry, however, soon broke up into two kinds according to the differences of character in the individual poets; for the graver among them would represent noble actions, and those of noble personages; and the meaner sort the actions of the ignoble. The latter class produced invectives at first, just as others did hymns and panegyrics. We know of no such poem by any of the pre-Homeric poets, though there were probably many such writers among them; instances, however, may be found from Homer downwards, e.g. his *Margites*, and the similar poems of others. In this poetry of invective its natural fitness brought an iambic metre into use; hence our present term 'iambic', because it was the metre of their 'iambos' or invectives against one another. The result was that the old poets became some of them writers of heroic and others of iambic verse. Homer's position, however, is peculiar: just as he was in the serious style the poet of poets, standing alone not only through the literary excellence, but also through the dramatic character of his imitations, so too he was the first to outline for us the general forms of Comedy by producing not a dramatic invective, but a dramatic picture of the Ridiculous; his *Margites* in fact stands in the same relation to our comedies as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to our tragedies. As soon, however, as Tragedy and Comedy appeared in the field, those naturally drawn to the one line of poetry became writers of comedies instead of iambs, and those naturally drawn to the other, writers of tragedies instead of epics, because these new modes of art were grander and of more esteem than the old.

If it be asked whether Tragedy is now all that it need be in its formative elements, to consider that, and decide it theoretically and in relation to the theatres, is a matter for another inquiry.

It certainly began in improvisations – as did also Comedy; the one originating with the authors of the Dithyramb, the other with those of the phallic songs, which still survive as institutions in many of our cities. And its advance after that was little by little, through their improving on whatever they had before them at each stage. It was in fact only after a long series of changes that the movement of Tragedy stopped on its attaining to its natural form. (1) The number of actors was first increased to two by Aeschylus, who curtailed the business of the Chorus, and made the dialogue, or spoken portion, take the leading part in the play. (2) A third actor and scenery were due to Sophocles. (3) Tragedy acquired also its magnitude. Discarding short stories and a ludicrous diction through its passing out of its satyric stage, it assumed, though only at a late point in its progress, a tone of dignity; and its metre changed then from trochaic to iambic. The reason for their original use of the trochaic tetrameter was that their poetry was satyric and more connected with dancing than it now is. As soon, however, as a spoken part came in, nature herself found the appropriate metre. The iambic, we know, is the most speakable of metres, as is shown by the fact that we very often fall into it in conversation, whereas we rarely talk hexameters, and only when we depart from the speaking tone of voice. (4) Another change was a plurality of episodes or acts. As for the remaining matters, the super-added embellishments and the account of their introduction, these must be taken as said, as it would probably be a long piece of work to go through the details.

5 As for Comedy, it is (as has been observed an imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others; the mask, for instance that excites laughter, is something ugly and distorted without causing pain.

Though the successive changes in Tragedy and their authors are not unknown, we cannot say the

1449^b same of Comedy; its early stages passed unnoticed, because it was not as yet taken up in a serious way. It was only at a late point in its progress that a chorus of comedians was officially granted by the archon; they used to be mere volunteers. It had also already certain definite forms at the time when the record of those termed comic poets begins. Who it was who supplied it with masks, or prologues, or a plurality of actors and the like, has remained unknown. The invented Fable, or Plot, however, originated in Sicily with Epicharmus and Phormis; of Athenian poets Crates was the first to drop the Comedy of invective and frame stories of a general and non-personal nature, in other words, Fables or Plots.

Epic poetry, then, has been seen to agree with Tragedy to this extent, that of being an imitation of serious subjects in a grand kind of verse. It differs from it, however, (1) in that it is in one kind of verse and in narrative form; and (2) in its length – which is due to its action having no fixed limit of time, whereas Tragedy endeavours to keep as far as possible within a single circuit of the sun, or something near that. This, I say, is another point of difference between them, though at first the practice in this respect was just the same in tragedies as in epic poems. They differ also (3) in their constituents, some being common to both and others peculiar to Tragedy – hence a judge of good and bad in Tragedy is a judge of that in epic poetry also. All the parts of an epic are included in Tragedy; but those of Tragedy are not all of them to be found in the Epic.

6 Reserving hexameter poetry and Comedy for consideration hereafter, let us proceed now to the discussion of Tragedy; before doing so, however, we must gather up the definition resulting from what has been said. A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. Here by 'language with pleasurable accessories' I mean that with rhythm and harmony or song superadded; and by 'the kinds separately' I mean that some portions are worked out with verse only, and others in turn with song.

I. As they act the stories, it follows that in the first place the Spectacle (or stage-appearance of the actors) must be some part of the whole; and in the second Melody and Diction, these two being the means of their imitation. Here by 'Diction' I mean merely this, the composition of the verses; and by 'Melody,' what is too completely understood to require explanation. But further: the subject represented also is an action; and the action involves agents, who must necessarily have their distinctive qualities both of character and thought, since it is from these that we ascribe certain qualities to their actions. There are in the natural order of things, therefore, two causes, Thought and Character, of their actions, and consequently of their success or failure in their lives. Now the action (that which was done) is represented in the play by the Fable or Plot. The Fable, in our present sense of the term, is simply this, the combination of the incidents, or things done in the story; whereas Character is what makes us ascribe certain moral qualities to the agents; and Thought is shown in all they say when proving a particular point or, it may be, enunciating a general truth. There are six parts consequently of every tragedy, as a whole (that is) of such or such quality, viz. a Fable or Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, and Melody; two of them arising from the means, one from the manner, and three from the objects of the dramatic imitation; and there is nothing else besides these six. Of these, its formative elements, then, not a few of the dramatists have made due use, as every play, one may say, admits of Spectacle, Character, Fable, Diction, Melody and Thought.

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II. The most important of the six is the combination of the incidents of the story. Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery. All human happiness or misery takes the form of action; the end for which we live is a certain kind of activity, not a quality. Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions – what we do – that we are happy or the reverse. In a play accordingly they do not act in order to portray the Characters; they include the Characters for the sake of the action. So that it is the action in it, i.e. its Fable or Plot, that is the end and purpose of the tragedy; and the end is everywhere the chief thing. Besides this, a tragedy is impossible without action, but

there may be one without Character. The tragedies of most of the moderns are characterless – a defect common among poets of all kinds, and with its counterpart in painting in Zeuxis as compared with Polygnotus for whereas the latter is strong in character, the work of Zeuxis is devoid of it. And again: one may string together a series of characteristic speeches of the utmost finish as regards Diction and Thought, and yet fail to produce the true tragic effect; but one will have much better success with a tragedy which, however inferior in these respects, has a Plot, a combination of incidents, in it. And again: the most powerful elements of attraction in Tragedy, the Peripeties and Discoveries, are parts of the Plot. A further proof is in the fact that beginners succeed earlier with the Diction and Characters than with the construction of a story; and the same may be said of nearly all the early dramatists. We maintain, therefore, that the first essential, the life and soul, so to speak, of Tragedy is the Plot and that the Characters come second – compare the parallel in painting where the most beautiful colours laid on without order will not give one the same pleasure as a simple black-and-white sketch of a portrait. We maintain that Tragedy is primarily an imitation of action, and that it is mainly for the sake of the action that it imitates the personal agents. Thus comes the element of Thought, i.e. the power of saying whatever can be said, or what is appropriate to the occasion. This is what, in the speech in Tragedy, falls under the arts of Politics and Rhetoric; for the older poets make their personages discourse like statesmen, and the modern like rhetoricians. One must not confuse it with Character. Character in a play is that which reveals the moral purpose of the agents, i.e. the sort of thing they seek or avoid, where that is not obvious – hence there is no room for Character in a speech on a purely indifferent subject. Thought, on the other hand, is shown in all they say when proving or disproving some particular point, or enunciating some universal proposition. Fourth among the literary elements is the Diction of the personages, i.e., as before explained, the expression of their thoughts in words, which is practically the same thing with verse as with prose. As for the two remaining parts, the Melody is the greatest of the pleasurable accessories of Tragedy. The Spectacle, though an attraction, is

the least artistic of all the parts, and has least to do with the art of poetry. The tragic effect is quite possible without a public performance and actors; and besides, the getting-up of the Spectacle is more a matter for the costumier than the poet.

7 Having thus distinguished the parts, let us now consider the proper construction of the Fable or Plot, as that is at once the first and the most important thing in Tragedy. We have laid it down that a tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete in itself, as a whole of some magnitude; for a whole may be of no magnitude to speak of. Now a whole is that which has beginning, middle, and end. A beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end is that which is naturally after something itself, either as its necessary or usual consequent, and with nothing else after it; and a middle, that which is by nature after one thing and has also another after it. A well-constructed Plot, therefore, cannot either begin or end at any point one likes; beginning and end in it must be of the forms just described. Again: to be beautiful, a living creature, and every whole made up of parts, must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts, but also be of a certain definite magnitude. Beauty is a matter of size and order, and therefore impossible either (1) in a very minute creature, since our perception becomes indistinct as it approaches instantaneity; or (2) in a creature of vast size – one, say, 1,000 miles long – as in that case, instead of the object being seen all at once, the unity and wholeness of it is lost to the beholder. Just in the same way, then, as a beautiful whole made up of parts, or a beautiful living creature, must be of some size, but a size to be taken in by the eye, so a story or Plot must be of some length, but of a length to be taken in by the memory. As for the limit of its length, so far as that is relative to public performances and spectators, it does not fall within the theory of poetry. If they had to perform a hundred tragedies, they would be timed by water-clocks, as they are said to have been at one period. The limit, however, set by the actual nature of the thing is this: the longer the story, consistently with its being comprehensible as a whole, the finer it is by reason of its magnitude. As a rough general formula, 'a length which allows of the

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hero passing by a series of probable or necessary stages from misfortune to happiness, or from happiness to misfortune,' may suffice as a limit for the magnitude of the story.

8 The Unity of a Plot does not consist, as some suppose, in its having one man as its subject. An infinity of things befall that one man, some of which it is impossible to reduce to unity; and in like manner there are many actions of one man which cannot be made to form one action. One sees, therefore, the mistake of all the poets who have written a *Heracleid*, a *Theseid*, or similar poems; they suppose that, because Heracles was one man, the story also of Heracles must be one story. Homer, however, evidently understood this point quite well, whether by art or instinct, just in the same way as he excels the rest in every other respect. In writing an *Odyssey*, he did not make the poem cover all that ever befell his hero – it befell him, for instance, to get wounded on Parnassus and also to feign madness at the time of the call to arms, but the two incidents had no necessary or probable connexion with one another – instead of doing that, he took as the subject of the *Odyssey*, as also of the *Iliad*, an action with a Unity of the kind we are describing. The truth is that, just as in the other imitative arts one imitation is always of one thing, so in poetry the story, as an imitation of action, must represent one action, a complete whole, with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole. For that which makes no perceptible difference by its presence or absence is no real part of the whole.

1451^b 9 From what we have said it will be seen that the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse – you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars.

By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do – which is the aim of poetry, though it affixes proper names to the characters; by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him. In Comedy this has become clear by this time; it is only when their plot is already made up of probable incidents that they give it a basis of proper names, choosing for the purpose any names that may occur to them, instead of writing like the old iambic poets about particular person. In Tragedy, however, they still adhere to the historic names; and for this reason: what convinces is the possible; now whereas we are not yet sure as to the possibility of that which has not happened, that which has happened is manifestly possible, else it would not have come to pass. Nevertheless even in Tragedy there are some plays with but one or two known names in them, the rest being inventions; and there are some without a single known name, e.g. Agathon's *Antheus*, in which both incidents and names are of the poet's invention; and it is no less delightful on that account. So that one must not aim at a rigid adherence to the traditional stories on which tragedies are based. It would be absurd, in fact, to do so, as even the known stories are only known to a few, though they are a delight none the less to all.

It is evident from the above that the poet must be more the poet of his stories or Plots than of his verses, inasmuch as he is a poet by virtue of the imitative element in his work, and it is actions that he imitates. And if he should come to take a subject from actual history, he is none the less a poet for that; since some historic occurrences may very well be in the probable and possible order of things; and it is in that aspect of them that he is their poet.

Of simple Plots and actions the episodic are the worst. I call a Plot episodic when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of its episodes. Actions of this sort bad poets construct through their own fault, and good ones on account of the players. His work being for public performance, a good poet often stretches out a Plot beyond its capabilities, and is thus obliged to twist the sequence of incident.

Tragedy, however, is an imitation not only of a complete action, but also of incidents arousing pity and fear. Such incidents have the very

greatest effect on the mind when they occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another; there is more of the marvellous in them than if they happened of themselves or by mere chance. Even matters of chance seem most marvellous if there is an appearance of design as it were in them; as for instance the statue of Mityas at Argos killed the author of Mityas' death by falling down on him when a looker-on at a public spectacle; for incidents like that we think to be not without a meaning. A Plot therefore, of this sort is necessarily finer than others.

10 Plots are either simple or complex, since the actions they represent are naturally of this twofold description. The action, proceeding in the way defined, as one continuous whole, I call simple, when the change in the hero's fortunes takes place without Peripety or Discovery; and complex, when it involves one or the other, or both. These should each of them arise out of the structure of the Plot itself, so as to be the consequence, necessary or probable, of the antecedents. There is a great difference between a thing happening *propter hoc* and *post hoc*.

11 A Peripety is the change of the kind described from one state of things within the play to its opposite, and that too in the way we are saying, in the probable or necessary sequence of events; as it is for instance in *Oedipus*: here the opposite state of things is produced by the Messenger, who, coming to gladden Oedipus and to remove his fears as to his mother, reveals the secret of his birth. And in *Lynceus*: just as he is being led off for execution, with Danaus at his side to put him to death, the incidents preceding this bring it about that he is saved and Danaus put to death. A Discovery is, as the very word implies, a change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus to either love or hate, in the personages marked for good or evil fortune. The finest form of Discovery is one attended by Peripeties, like that which goes with the Discovery in *Oedipus*. There are no doubt other forms of it; what we have said may happen in a way in reference to inanimate things, even things of a very casual kind; and it is also possible to discover whether some one has done or not done something. But the form most directly connected with the Plot and the action of

the piece is the first-mentioned. This, with a Peripety, will arouse either pity or fear – actions of that nature being what Tragedy is assumed to represent; and it will also serve to bring about the happy or unhappy ending. The Discovery, then, being of persons, it may be that of one party only to the other, the latter being already known; or both the parties may have to discover themselves. Iphigenia, for instance, was discovered to Orestes by sending the letter; and another Discovery was required to reveal him to Iphigenia.

Two parts of the Plot, then, Peripety and Discovery, are on matters of this sort. A third part is Suffering; which we may define as an action of a destructive or painful nature, such as murders on the stage, tortures, woundings, and the like. The other two have been already explained.

12 The parts of Tragedy to be treated as formative elements in the whole were mentioned in a previous Chapter. From the point of view, however, of its quantity, i.e. the separate sections into which it is divided, a tragedy has the following parts: Prologue, Episode, Exode, and a choral portion, distinguished into Parode and Stasimon; these two are common to all tragedies, whereas songs from the stage and *Commoe* are only found in some. The Prologue is all that precedes the Parode of the chorus; an Episode all that comes in between two whole choral songs; the Exode all that follows after the last choral song. In the choral portion the Parode is the whole first statement of the chorus; a Stasimon, a song of the chorus without anapaests or trochees; a *Commoe*, a lamentation sung by chorus and actor in concert. The parts of Tragedy to be used as formative elements in the whole we have already mentioned; the above are its parts from the point of view of its quantity, or the separate sections into which it is divided.

13 The next points after what we have said above will be these: (1) What is the poet to aim at, and what is he to avoid, in constructing his Plots? and (2) What are the conditions on which the tragic effect depends?

We assume that, for the finest form of Tragedy, the Plot must be not simple but complex; and further, that it must imitate actions arousing fear and pity, since that is the distinctive function of this kind of imitation. It follows, therefore, that

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there are three forms of Plot to be avoided. (1) A good man must not be seen passing from happiness to misery, or (2) a bad man from misery to happiness. The first situation is not fear-inspiring or piteous, but simply odious to us. The second is the most untragic that can be; it has no one of the requisites of Tragedy; it does not appeal either to the human feeling in us, or to our pity, or to our fears. Nor, on the other hand, should (3) an extremely bad man be seen falling from happiness into misery. Such a story may arouse the human feeling in us, but it will not move us to either pity or fear; pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that of one like ourselves; so that there will be nothing either piteous or fear-inspiring in the situation. There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement, of the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity; e.g. Oedipus, Thyestes, and the men of note of similar families. The perfect Plot, accordingly, must have a single, and not (as some tell us) a double issue; the change in the hero's fortunes must be not from misery to happiness, but on the contrary from happiness to misery; and the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part; the man himself being either such as we have described, or better, not worse, than that. Fact also confirms our theory. Though the poets began by accepting any tragic story that came to hand, in these days the finest tragedies are always on the story of some few houses, on that of Alcmeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, or any others that may have been involved, as either agents or sufferers, in some deed of horror. The theoretically best tragedy, then, has a Plot of this description. The critics, therefore, are wrong who blame Euripides for taking this line in his tragedies, and giving many of them an unhappy ending. It is, as we have said, the right line to take. The best proof is this: on the stage, and in the public performances, such plays, properly worked out, are seen to be the most truly tragic; and Euripides, even if his execution be faulty in every other point, is seen to be nevertheless the most tragic certainly of the dramatists. After this comes the construction of Plot with some rank first, one with a double story

(like the *Odyssey*) and an opposite issue for the good and the bad personages. It is ranked as first only through the weakness of the audiences; the poets merely follow their public, writing as its wishes dictate. But the pleasure here is not that of Tragedy. It belongs rather to Comedy, where the bitterest enemies in the piece (e.g. Orestes and Aegisthus) walk off good friends at the end, with no slaying of any one by any one.

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14 The tragic fear and pity may be aroused by the Spectacle; but they may also be aroused by the very structure and incidents of the play – which is the better way and shows the better poet. The Plot in fact should be so framed that, even without seeing the things take place, he who simply hears the account of them shall be filled with horror and pity at the incidents; which is just the effect that the mere recital of the story in *Oedipus* would have on one. To produce this same effect by means of the Spectacle is less artistic, and requires extraneous aid. Those, however, who make use of the Spectacle to put before us that which is merely monstrous and not productive of fear, are wholly out of touch with Tragedy; not every kind of pleasure should be required of a tragedy, but only its own proper pleasure.

The tragic pleasure is that of pity and fear, and the poet has to produce it by a work of imitation; it is clear, therefore, that the causes should be included in the incidents of his story. Let us see, then, what kinds of incident strike one as horrible, or rather as piteous. In a deed of this description the parties must necessarily be either friends, or enemies, or indifferent to one another. Now when enemy does it on enemy, there is nothing to move us to pity either in his doing or in his meditating the deed, except so far as the actual pain of the sufferer is concerned; and the same is true when the parties are indifferent to one another. Whenever the tragic deed, however, is done within the family – when murder or the like is done or mediated by brother on brother, by son on father, by mother on son, or son on mother – these are the situations the poet should seek after. The traditional stories, accordingly, must be kept as they are, e.g. the murder of Clytaemnestra by Orestes and of Eriphyle by Alcmeon. At the same time even with these there is something left to the poet himself; it is for him to devise the right way of treating them. Let us

explain more clearly what we mean by 'the right way'. The deed of horror may be done by the doer knowingly and consciously, as in the old poets, and in Medea's murder of her children in Euripides. Or he may do it, but in ignorance of his relationship, and discover that afterwards, as does the Oedipus in Sophocles. Here the deed is outside the play; but it may be within it, like the act of the Alcmeon in Astydamas, or that of the Telegonus in *Ulysses Wounded*. A third possibility is for one meditating some deadly injury to another, in ignorance of his relationship, to make the discovery in time to draw back. These exhaust the possibilities, since the deed must necessarily be either done or not done, and either knowingly or unknowingly.

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The worst situation is when the personage is with full knowledge on the point of doing the deed, and leaves it undone. It is odious and also (through the absence of suffering) untragic; hence it is that no one is made to act thus except in some few instances, e.g. Haemon and Creon in *Antigone*. Next after this comes the actual perpetration of the deed mediated. A better situation than that, however, is for the deed to be done in ignorance, and the relationship discovered afterwards, since there is nothing odious in it, and the Discovery will serve to astound us. But the best of all is the last; what we have in *Cresphontes*, for example, where Merope, on the point of slaying her son, recognizes him in time; in *Iphigenia*, where sister and brother are in a like position; and in *Helle*, where the son recognizes his mother, when on the point of giving her up to her enemy.

This will explain why our tragedies are restricted (as we said just now) to such a small number of families. It was accident rather than art that led the poets in quest of subjects to embody this kind of incident in their Plots. They are still obliged, accordingly, to have recourse to the families in which such horrors have occurred.

On the construction of the Plot, and the kind of Plot required for Tragedy, enough has now been said.

15 In the Characters there are four points to aim at. First and foremost, that they shall be good. There will be an element of character in the play, if (as has been observed) what a personage

says or does reveals a certain moral purpose; and a good element of character, if the purpose so revealed is good. Such goodness is possible in every type of personage, even in a woman or a slave, though the one is perhaps an inferior, and the other a wholly worthless being. The second point is to make them appropriate. The Character before us may be, say, manly; but it is not appropriate in a female Character to be manly, or clever. The third is to make them like the reality, which is not the same as their being good and appropriate, in our sense of the term. The fourth is to make them consistent and the same throughout; even if inconsistency be part of the man before one for imitation as presenting that form of character, he should still be consistently inconsistent. We have an instance of baseness of character, not required for the story, in the Menelaus in *Orestes*; of the incongruous and unbecoming in the lamentation of Ulysses in *Scylla*, and in the (clever) speech of Melanippe; and of inconsistency in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, where Iphigenia the suppliant is utterly unlike the later Iphigenia. The right thing, however, is in the Characters just as in the incidents of the play to endeavour always after the necessary or the probable; so that whenever such-and-such a personage says or does such-and-such a thing, it shall be the necessary or probable outcome of his character; and whenever this incident follows on that, it shall be either the necessary or the probable consequence of it. From this one sees (to digress for a moment) that the Dénouement also should arise out of the plot itself, and not depend on a stage-artifice, as in *Medea*, or in the story of the (arrested) departure of the Greeks in the *Iliad*. The artifice must be reserved for matters outside the play – for past events beyond human knowledge, or events yet to come, which require to be foretold or announced; since it is the privilege of the Gods to know everything. There should be nothing improbable among the actual incidents. If it be unavoidable, however, it should be outside the tragedy, like the improbability in the *Oedipus* of Sophocles. But to return to the Characters. As Tragedy is an imitation of personages better than the ordinary man, we in our way should follow the example of good portrait-painters, who reproduce the distinctive features of a man, and at the same time, without losing the likeness, make him handsomer than he is. The poet in like

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manner, in portraying men quick or slow to anger, or with similar infirmities of character, must know how to represent them as such, and at the same time as good men, as Agathon and Homer have represented Achilles.

All these rules one must keep in mind throughout, and, further, those also for such points of stage-effect as directly depend on the art of the poet, since in these too one may often make mistakes. Enough, however, has been said on the subject in one of our published writings.

16 Discovery in general has been explained already. As for the species of Discovery, the first to be noted is (1) the least artistic form of it, of which the poets make most use through mere lack of invention, Discovery by signs or marks. Of these signs some are congenital, like the 'lance-head which the Earth-born have on them', or 'stars', such as Carcinus brings in his *Thyestes*; others acquired after birth – these latter being either marks on the body, e.g. scars, or external tokens, like necklaces, or (to take another sort of instance) the ark in the Discovery in *Tyro*. Even these, however, admit of two uses, a better and a worse; the scar of Ulysses is an instance; the Discovery of him through it is made in one way by the nurse and in another by the swineherds. A Discovery using signs as a means of assurance is less artistic, as indeed are all such as imply reflection; whereas one bringing them in all of a sudden, as in the *Bath-story*, is of a better order. Next after these are (2) Discoveries made directly by the poet; which are inartistic for that very reason; e.g. Orestes' Discovery of himself in *Iphigenia*: whereas his sister reveals who she is by the letter, Orestes is made to say himself what the poet rather than the story demands. This, therefore, is not far removed from the first-mentioned fault, since he might have presented certain tokens as well. Another instance is the 'shuttle's voice' in the *Tereus* of Sophocles. (3) A third species is Discovery through memory, from a man's consciousness being awakened by something seen. Thus in *The Cypriote* of Dicaeogenes, the sight of the picture makes the man burst into tears; and in the *Tale of Alcinous*, hearing the harper Ulysses is reminded of the past and weeps; the Discovery of them being the result. (4) A fourth kind is Discovery through reasoning; e.g. in *The Choephoroe*; 'One like me is here; there is

no one like me but Orestes; he, therefore, must be here.' Or that which Polyidus the Sophist suggested for *Iphigenia*; since it was natural for Orestes to reflect: 'My sister was sacrificed, and I am to be sacrificed like her.' Or that in the *Tydeus* of Theodectes: 'I came to find a son, and am to die myself.' Or that in *The Phinidae*: on seeing the place the women inferred their fate, that they were to die there, since they had also been exposed there. (5) There is, too, a composite Discovery arising from bad reasoning on the side of the other party. An instance of it is in Ulysses the *False Messenger*: he said he should know the bow – which he had not seen; but to suppose from that that he would know it again (as though he had once seen it) was bad reasoning. (6) The best of all Discoveries, however, is that arising from the incidents themselves, when the great surprise comes about through a probable incident, like that in the *Oedipus* of Sophocles; and also in *Iphigenia*; for it was not improbable that she should wish to have a letter taken home. These last are the only Discoveries independent of the artifice of signs and necklaces. Next after them come Discoveries through reasoning.

17 At the time when he is constructing his Plots, and engaged on the Diction in which they are worked out, the poet should remember (1) to put the actual scenes as far as possible before his eyes. In this way, seeing everything with the vividness of an eye-witness as it were, he will devise what is appropriate, and be least likely to overlook incongruities. This is shown by what was censured in Carcinus, the return of Amphiarus from the sanctuary; it would have passed unnoticed, if it had not been actually seen by the audience; but on the stage his play failed, the incongruity of the incident offending the spectators. (2) As far as may be, too, the poet should even act his story with the very gestures of his personages. Given the same natural qualifications, he who feels the emotions to be described will be the most convincing; distress and anger, for instance, are portrayed most truthfully by one who is feeling them at the moment. Hence it is that poetry demands a man with a special gift for it, or else one with a touch of madness in him; the former can easily assume the required mood, and the latter may be actually beside himself with emotion. (3) His story, again, whether already

made or of his own making, he should first simplify and reduce to a universal form, before proceeding to lengthen it out by the insertion of episodes. The following will show how the universal element in *Iphigenia*, for instance, may be viewed: A certain maiden having been offered in sacrifice, and spirited away from her sacrifices into another land, where the custom was to sacrifice all strangers to the Goddess, she was made there the priestess of this rite. Long after that the brother of the priestess happened to come; the fact, however, of the oracle having for a certain reason bidden him go thither, and his object in going, are outside the Plot of the play. On his coming he was arrested, and about to be sacrificed, when he revealed who he was – either as Euripides puts it, or (as suggested by Polyidus) by the not improbable exclamation, ‘So I too am doomed to be sacrificed, as my sister was’; and the disclosure led to his salvation. This done, the next thing, after the proper names have been fixed as a basis for the story, is to work in episodes or accessory incidents. One must mind, however, that the episodes are appropriate, like the fit of madness in Orestes, which led to his arrest, and the purifying, which brought about his salvation. In plays, then, the episodes are short; in epic poetry they serve to lengthen out the poem. The argument of the *Odyssey* is not a long one. A certain man has been abroad many years; Poseidon is ever on the watch for him, and he is all alone. Matters at home too have come to this, that his substance is being wasted and his son’s death plotted by suitors to his wife. Then he arrives there himself after his grievous sufferings; reveals himself, and falls on his enemies; and the end is his salvation and their death. This being all that is proper to the *Odyssey*, everything else in it is episode.

1455^b 18 (4) There is a further point to be borne in mind. Every tragedy is in part Complication and in part Dénouement; the incidents before the opening scene, and often certain also of those within the play, forming the Complication; and the rest the Dénouement. By Complication I mean all from the beginning of the story to the point just before the change in the hero’s fortunes; by Dénouement, all from the beginning of the change to the end. In the *Lyneus* of Theodectes, for instance, the Complication includes,

together with the presupposed incidents, the seizure of the child and that in turn of the parents; and the Dénouement all from the indictment for the murder to the end. Now it is right, when one speaks of a tragedy as the same or not the same as another, to do so on the ground before all else of their Plot, i.e. as having the same or not the same Complication and Dénouement. Yet there are many dramatists who, after a good Complication, fail in the Dénouement. But it is necessary for both points of construction to be always duly mastered. (5) There are four distinct species of Tragedy – that being the number of the constituents also that have been mentioned: first, the complex Tragedy, which is all Peripety and Discovery; second, the Tragedy of suffering, e.g. the *Ajaxes* and *Ixions*; third, the Tragedy of character, e.g. *The Phthiotides* and *Peleus*. The fourth constituent is that of ‘Spectacle’, exemplified in *The Phorcidæ*, in *Prometheus*, and in all plays with the scene laid in the nether world. The poet’s aim, then, should be to combine every element of interest, if possible, or else the more important and the major part of them. This is now especially necessary owing to the unfair criticism to which the poet is subjected in these days. Just because there have been poets before him strong in the several species of tragedy, the critics now expect the one man to surpass that which was the strong point of each one of his predecessors. (6) One should also remember what has been said more than once, and not write a tragedy on an epic body of incident (i.e. one with a plurality of stories in it), by attempting to dramatize, for instance, the entire story of the *Iliad*. In the epic owing to its scale every part is treated at proper length; with a drama, however, on the same story the result is very disappointing. This is shown by the fact that all who have dramatized the fall of Illium in its entirety, and not part by part, like Euripides, of the whole of the Niobe story, instead of a portion, like Aeschylus, either fail utterly or have but ill success on the stage; for that and that alone was enough to ruin even a play by Agathon. Yet in their Peripeties, as also in their simple plots, the poets I mean show wonderful skill in aiming at the kind of effect they desire – a tragic situation that arouses the human feeling in one, like the clever villain (e.g. Sisyphus) deceived, or the brave wrongdoer worsted. This is probable, however, only in Agathon’s sense, when he speaks

of the probability of even improbabilities coming to pass. (7) The Chorus too should be regarded as one of the actors; it should be an integral part of the whole, and take a share in the action – that which it has in Sophocles, rather than in Euripides. With the later poets, however, the songs in a play of theirs have no more to do with the Plot of that than of any other tragedy. Hence it is that they are now singing intercalary pieces, a practice first introduced by Agathon. And yet what real difference is there between singing such intercalary pieces, and attempting to fit in a speech, or even a whole act, from one play into another?

19 The Plot and Characters having been discussed, it remains to consider the Diction and Thought. As for the Thought, we may assume what is said of it in our *Art of Rhetoric*, as it belongs more properly to that department of inquiry. The Thought of the personages is shown in everything to be effected by their language – in every effort to prove or disprove, to arouse emotion (pity, fear, anger, and the like), or to maximize or minimize things. It is clear, also, that their mental procedure must be on the same lines – their actions likewise, whenever they wish them to arouse pity or horror, or to have a look of importance or probability. The only difference is that with the act the impression has to be made without explanation; whereas with the spoken word it has to be produced by the speaker, and result from his language. What, indeed, would be the good of the speaker, if things appeared in the required light even apart from anything he says?

[. . .]

22 The perfection of Diction is for it to be at once clear and not mean. The clearest indeed is that made up of the ordinary words for things, but it is mean, as is shown by the poetry of Cleophon and Sthenelus. On the other hand the Diction becomes distinguished and non-prosaic by the use of unfamiliar terms, i.e. strange words, metaphors, lengthened forms, and everything that deviates from the ordinary modes of speech. – But a whole statement in such terms will be either a riddle or a barbarism, a riddle, if made up of metaphors, a barbarism, if made up of strange words. The very nature indeed of a riddle is this, to describe a fact in an impossible combination of words (which cannot be done with the

real names for things, but can be with their metaphorical substitutes); e.g. ‘I saw a man glue brass on another with fire’, and the like. The corresponding use of strange words results in a barbarism. – A certain admixture, accordingly, of unfamiliar terms is necessary. These, the strange word, the metaphor, the ornamental equivalent, &c., will save the language from seeming mean and prosaic, while the ordinary words in it will secure the requisite clearness. What helps most, however, to render the Diction at once clear and non-prosaic is the use of the lengthened, curtailed, and altered forms of words. Their deviation from the ordinary words will, by making the language unlike that in general use, give it a non-prosaic appearance; and their having much in common with the words in general use will give it the quality of clearness. It is not right, then, to condemn these modes of speech, and ridicule the poet for using them, as some have done; e.g. the elder Euclid, who said it was easy to make poetry if one were to be allowed to lengthen the words in the statement itself as much as one likes. . . . A too apparent use of these licences has certainly a ludicrous effect, but they are not alone in that; the rule of moderation applies to all the constituents of the poetic vocabulary; even with metaphors, strange words, and the rest, the effect will be the same, if one uses them improperly and with a view to provoking laughter. The proper use of them is a very different thing. To realize the difference one should take an epic verse and see how it reads when the normal words are introduced. The same should be done too with the strange word, the metaphor, and the rest; for one has only to put the ordinary words in their place to see the truth of what we are saying. The same iambic, for instance, is found in Aeschylus and Euripides, and as it stands in the former it is a poor line; whereas Euripides, by the change of a single word, the substitution of a strange for what is by usage the ordinary word, has made it seem a fine one. [. . .]

It is a great thing, indeed, to make a proper use of these poetical forms, as also of compounds and strange words. But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.

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Of the kinds of words we have enumerated it may be observed that compounds are most in place in the dithyramb, strange words in heroic, and metaphors in iambic poetry. Heroic poetry, indeed, may avail itself of them all. But in iambic verse, which models itself as far as possible on the spoken language, only those kinds of words are in place which are allowable also in an oration, i.e. the ordinary word, the metaphor, and the ornamental equivalent.

Let this, then, suffice as an account of Tragedy, the art imitating by means of action on the stage.

23 As for the poetry which merely narrates, or imitates by means of versified language (without action), it is evident that it has several points in common with Tragedy.

I. The construction of its stories should clearly be like that in a drama; they should be based on a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself, with a beginning, middle, and end, so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure with all the organic unity of a living. Nor should one suppose that there is anything like them in our usual histories. A history has to deal not with one action, but with one period and all that happened in that to one or more persons, however disconnected the several events may have been. Just as two events may take place at the same time, e.g. the sea-fight off Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily, without converging to the same end, so too of two consecutive events one may sometimes come after the other with no one end as their common issue. Nevertheless most of our epic poets, one may say, ignore the distinction.

Herein, then, to repeat what we have said before, we have a further proof of Homer's marvellous superiority to the rest. He did not attempt to deal even with the Trojan war in its entirety, though it was a whole with a definite beginning and end – through a feeling apparently that it was too long a story to be taken in in one view, or if not that, too complicated from the variety of incident in it. As it is, he has singled out one section of the whole; many of the other incidents, however, he brings in as episodes, using the Catalogue of the Ships, for instance, and other episodes to relieve the uniformity of his narrative. [...]

24 II. Besides this, Epic poetry must divide into the same species as Tragedy; it must be either simple or complex, a story of character or one of suffering. Its parts, too, with the exception of Song and Spectacle, must be the same, as it requires Peripeties, Discoveries, and scenes of suffering just like Tragedy. Lastly, the Thought and Diction in it must be good in their way. All these elements appear in Homer first; and he has made due use of them. His two poems are each examples of construction, the *Iliad* simple and a story of suffering, the *Odyssey* complex (there is Discovery throughout it) and a story of character. And they are more than this, since in Diction and Thought too they surpass all other poems.

There is, however, a difference in the Epic as compared with Tragedy, (1) in its length, and (2) in its metre. (1) As to its length, the limit already suggested will suffice: it must be possible for the beginning and end of the work to be taken in in one view – a condition which will be fulfilled if the poem be shorter than the old epics, and about as long as the series of tragedies offered for one hearing. For the extension of its length epic poetry has a special advantage, of which it makes large use. In a play one cannot represent an action with a number of parts going on simultaneously; one is limited to the part on the stage and connected with the actors. Whereas in epic poetry the narrative form makes it possible for one to describe a number of simultaneous incidents; and these, if germane to the subject, increase the body of the poem. This then is a gain to the Epic, tending to give it grandeur, and also variety of interest and room for episodes of diverse kinds. Uniformity of incident by the satiety it soon creates is apt to ruin tragedies on the stage. (2) As for its metre, the heroic has been assigned it from experience; were any one to attempt a narrative poem in some one, or in several, of the other metres, the incongruity of the thing would be apparent. The heroic in fact is the gravest and weightiest of metres – which is what makes it more tolerant than the rest of strange words and metaphors, that also being a point in which the narrative form of poetry goes beyond all others. The iambic and trochaic, on the other hand, are metres of movement, the one representing that of life and action, the other that of the dance. Still more unnatural would it appear, if one were to write an epic in a medley of metres, as

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Chaeremon did. Hence it is that no one has ever written a long story in any but heroic verse; nature herself, as we have said, teaches us to select the metre appropriate to such a story.

Homer, admirable as he is in every other respect, is especially so in this, that he alone among epic poets is not unaware of the part to be played by the poet himself in the poem. The poet should say very little *in propria persona*, as he is no imitator when doing that. Whereas the other poets are perpetually coming forward in person, and say but little, and that only here and there, as imitators, Homer after a brief preface brings in forthwith a man, a woman, or some other Character – no one of them characterless, but each with distinctive characteristics.

The marvellous is certainly required in Tragedy. The Epic, however, affords more opening for the improbable, the chief factor in the marvellous, because in it the agents are not visibly before one. The scene of the pursuit of Hector would be ridiculous on the stage – the Greeks halting instead of pursuing him, and Achilles shaking his head to stop them; but in the poem the absurdity is overlooked. The marvellous, however, is a cause of pleasure, as is shown by the fact that we all tell a story with additions, in the belief that we are doing our hearers a pleasure.

Homer more than any other has taught the rest of us the art of framing lies in the right way. I mean the use of paralogism. Whenever, if A is or happens, a consequent, B, is or happens, men's notion is that, if the B is, the A also is – but that is a false conclusion. Accordingly, if A is untrue, but there is something else, B, that on the assumption of its truth follows as its consequent, the right thing then is to add on the B. Just because we know the truth of the consequent, we are in our minds led on to the erroneous inference of the truth of the antecedent. Here is an instance, from the *Bath-story* in the *Odyssey*.

A likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility. The story should never be made up of improbable incidents; there should be nothing of the sort in it. If, however, such incidents are unavoidable, they should be outside the piece, like the hero's ignorance in *Oedipus* of the circumstances of Laius' death; not within it, like the report of the Pythian games in *Electra*, or the man's having come to Mysia from Tegea without uttering a word on the way, in *The*

Mysians. So that it is ridiculous to say that one's Plot would have been spoilt without them, since it is fundamentally wrong to make up such Plots. If the poet has taken such a Plot, however, and one sees that he might have put it in a more probable form, he is guilty of absurdity as well as a fault of art. Even in the *Odyssey* the improbabilities in the setting-ashore of Ulysses would be clearly intolerable in the hands of an inferior poet. As it is, the poet conceals them, his other excellences veiling their absurdity. Elaborate Diction, however, is required only in places where there is no action, and no Character or Thought to be revealed. Where there is Character or Thought, on the other hand, an over-ornate Diction tends to obscure them.

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25 As regards Problems and their Solutions, one may see the number and nature of the assumptions on which they proceed by viewing the matter in the following way. (1) The poet being an imitator just like the painter or other maker of likenesses, he must necessarily in all instances represent things in one or other of three aspects, either as they were or are, or as they are said or thought to be or to have been, or as they ought to be. (2) All this he does in language, with an admixture, it may be, of strange words and metaphors, as also of the various modified forms of words, since the use of these is conceded in poetry. (3) It is to be remembered, too, that there is not the same kind of correctness in poetry as in politics, or indeed any other art. There is, however, within the limits of poetry itself a possibility of two kinds of error, the one directly, the other only accidentally connected with the art. If the poet meant to describe the thing correctly, and failed through lack of power of expression, his art itself is at fault. But if it was through his having meant to describe it in some incorrect way (e.g. to make the horse in movement have both right legs thrown forward) that the technical error (one in a matter of, say, medicine or some other special science), or impossibilities of whatever kind they may be, have got into his description, his error in that case is not in the essentials of the poetic art. These, therefore, must be the premisses of the Solutions in answer to criticisms involved in the Problems.

I. As to the criticisms relating to the poet's art itself. Any impossibilities there may be in his

descriptions of things are faults. But from another point of view they are justifiable, if they serve the end of poetry itself – if (to assume what we have said of that end) they make the effect of either that very portion of the work or some other portion more astounding. The Pursuit of Hector is an instance in point. If, however, the poetic end might have been as well or better attained without sacrifice of technical correctness in such matters, the impossibility is not to be justified, since the description should be, if it can, entirely free from error. One may ask, too, whether the error is in a matter directly or only accidentally connected with the poetic art; since it is a lesser error in an artist not to know, for instance, that the hind has no horns, than to produce an unrecognizable picture of one.

II. If the poet's description be criticized as not true to fact, one may urge perhaps that the object ought to be as described – an answer like that of Sophocles, who said that he drew men as they ought to be, and Euripides as they were. If the description, however, be neither true nor of the thing as it ought to be, the answer must be then, that it is in accordance with opinion. The tales about Gods, for instance, may be as wrong as 1461^a Xenophanes thinks, neither true nor the better thing to say; but they are certainly in accordance with opinion. Of other statements in poetry one may perhaps say, not that they are better than the truth, but that the fact was so at the time; e.g. the description of the arms: 'their spears stood upright, butt-end upon the ground'; for that was the usual way of fixing them then, as it is still with the Illyrians. As for the question whether something said or done in a poem is morally right or not, in dealing with that one should consider not only the intrinsic quality of the actual word or deed, but also the person who says or does it, the person to whom he says or does it, the time, the means, and the motive of the agent – whether he does it to attain a greater good, or to avoid a greater evil. [. . .]

26 The question may be raised whether the epic or the tragic is the higher form of imitation. It may be argued that, if the less vulgar is the higher, and the less vulgar is always that which addresses the better public, an art addressing any and every one is of a very vulgar order. It is a belief that their public cannot see the meaning, unless they add

something themselves, that causes the perpetual movements of the performers – bad flute-players, for instance, rolling about, if quoit-throwing is to be represented, and pulling at the conductor, if Scylla is the subject of the piece. Tragedy, then, is said to be an art of this order – to be in fact just what the later actors were in the eyes of their predecessors; for Mynniscus used to call Callippides 'the ape', because he thought he so over-acted his parts; and a similar view was taken of Pindarus also. All Tragedy, however, is said to stand to the Epic as the newer to the older school of actors. The one, accordingly, is said to address a cultivated audience, which does not need the accompaniment of gesture; the other, an uncultivated one. If, therefore, Tragedy is a vulgar art, it must clearly be lower than the Epic.

The answer to this is twofold. In the first place, one may urge (1) that the censure does not touch the art of the dramatic poet, but only that of his interpreter; for it is quite possible to overdo the gesturing even in an epic recital, as did Sosistratus, and in a singing contest, as did Mnasisheus of Opus. (2) That one should not condemn all movement, unless one means to condemn even the dance, but only that of ignoble people – which is the point of the criticism passed on Callippides and in the present day on others, that their women are not like gentlewomen. (3) That Tragedy may produce its effect even without movement or action in just the same way as Epic poetry; for from the mere reading of a play its quality may be seen. So that, if it be superior in all other respects, this element of inferiority is no necessary part of it.

In the second place, one must remember (1) that Tragedy has everything that the Epic has (even the epic metre being admissible), together with a not inconsiderable addition in the shape of the Music (a very real factor in the pleasure of the drama) and the Spectacle. (2) That its reality of presentation is felt in the play as read, as well as in the play as acted. (3) That the tragic imitation requires less space for the attainment of its end; which is a great advantage, since the more concentrated effect is more pleasurable than one with a large admixture of time to dilute it – consider the *Oedipus* of Sophocles, for instance, and the effect of expanding it into the number of lines of the *Iliad*. (4) That there is less unity in the imitation of the epic poets, as is proved by the 1462^b

fact that any one work of theirs supplies matter for several tragedies; the result being that, if they take what is really a single story, it seems curt when briefly told, and thin and waterish when on the scale of length usual with their verse. In saying that there is less unity in an epic, I mean an epic made up of a plurality of actions, in the same way as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have many such parts, each one of them in itself of some magnitude; yet the structure of the two Homeric poems is as perfect as can be, and the action in them is as nearly as possible one action. If, then, Tragedy is

superior in these respects, and also, besides these, in its poetic effect (since the two forms of poetry should give us, not any or every pleasure, but the very special kind we have mentioned), it is clear that, as attaining the poetic effect better than the Epic, it will be the higher form of art.

So much for Tragedy and Epic poetry – for these two arts in general and their species; the number and nature of their constituent parts; the causes of success and failure in them; the Objections of the critics, and the Solutions in answer to them.

Ennead I, vi

Plotinus

Plotinus (ca. 205–70), the founder of Neoplatonism, was born in Egypt and lived in Rome, where he started a school of philosophy.

§1. Beauty is found for the most part in what is seen, but it is also found in sounds, when these are composed into words, and in all the arts generally.¹ For songs and rhythms are also beautiful. And beauty is also found by those who turn away from sense-perception towards the higher region; that is, practices,² actions, habits, and types of knowledge are beautiful, to say nothing of the beauty of the virtues. If there is some beauty prior to these, this discussion will show it.

What, then, is it that has made us imagine bodies to be beautiful and our sense of hearing incline to sounds, finding them beautiful? And as for the things that depend directly on the soul, how are all of these beautiful? Is it because all of them are beautiful by one and the same beauty, or is it that there is one sort of beauty in the body and another in other things? And what, then, are these sorts of beauty, or what is this beauty?

For some things, such as bodies, are not beautiful owing to what they are in themselves, but rather by participation, whereas some things are

beautiful in themselves, such as the nature that virtue is. This is so because bodies themselves sometimes appear beautiful and sometimes do not since the body and the beauty are distinct. What is it, then, that is present in the bodies [that makes them beautiful]? It is this that we must examine first. What is it, then, that moves the eyes of spectators and turns them³ towards it and draws them on and makes them rejoice at the sight? By finding this and using it as a stepping-stone, we might also be in a position to see the rest.

Practically everyone claims that proportion of parts in relation to each other and to the whole added to fine coloration makes something beautiful to see. And, generally, in regard to the objects of sight and all other things, their beauty consists in their proportion or measure. For those who hold this view, no simple thing will be beautiful; necessarily, beauty will exist only in the composite. The whole will be beautiful for them, while each of the parts will not have its own beauty but will be a contributing factor in making the whole beautiful. But it should be the case that if the whole is beautiful, the parts are also beautiful. For beauty is not made up out of ugly things; all of its parts are beautiful.

For these people, the beauty of colors, for example, and the light of the sun, since they are simple, do not have proportion and so will be

Plotinus, "Ennead I, vi" from *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, translated by John Dillon and Lloyd P. Gerson. Indianapolis, IN/Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 2004, pp. 18–30. Reproduced with permission of Hackett Publishing.

excluded from being beautiful. But, then, how is gold beautiful? And how about lightning in the night and the stars, which are beautiful to see? And as for the beauty of sounds, the simple ones will be eliminated for the same reason, although it is frequently the case that in the beauty of a whole [composition], each sound is itself beautiful. Further, when a face sometimes appears beautiful and sometimes not, though the proportion remains the same, would we not have to say that beauty is other than the proportion and that the proportion is beautiful because of something other than itself?

If they pass on to beautiful practices and expressions and attribute their beauty to proportion, what does it mean to say that there is proportion in beautiful practices or laws or studies or types of knowledge? For how could theories be proportional to each other? If it is because they are in harmony, it is also the case that there is agreement and harmony among bad theories. For example, to say that "self-control is stupidity" and "justice is silly nobility" is to say two things that are harmonious, or in concord, or agree with each other.

And then every type of virtue is a beauty in the soul and a beauty that is truer than the previous ones. But how are these proportioned? It is not as magnitudes or numbers⁴ that they are proportioned. And since there are several parts of the soul, what is the formula for the combination or the mixture of the parts or of the theories? And what would be the beauty of intellect taking it in isolation?⁵

§2. Taking up the matter again, let us say what, then, is the primary beauty in bodies. There is, of course, something that is perceived at first glance, and the soul speaks about it as it does about that with which it is familiar, and takes it in as something that it recognizes and, in a way, it finds itself in concord with it. But when it encounters the ugly, it holds back and rejects it and recoils from it as something with which it is not in harmony and as something that is alien to it. We say, then, that the soul, having the nature it does and turned in the direction of the greater essence in the realm of true reality, when it sees something to which it has an affinity or something that is a trace of that to which it has an affinity, is both delighted and thrilled and returns to itself and recalls itself and what belongs to itself.

What likeness is there, then, between the things here in relation to the things that are beautiful in the intelligible world? For if there is a likeness, then we assume that there are like things. How, then, are things here and there both beautiful? We say that these are beautiful by participation in Form. For everything that is shapeless but is by nature capable of receiving shape or form is, having no share in an expressed principle or form, ugly and stands outside of divine reason. This is complete ugliness.

But something is also ugly if it has not been mastered by shape and an expressed principle owing to the fact that its matter has not allowed itself to be shaped completely according to form. The form, then, approaches [the matter] and orders that which is to be a single composite from many parts, and guides it into being a completed unity and makes it one by the parts' acceptance of this; and since the form is one, that which is shaped had to be one, to the extent possible for that which is composed of many parts.

Beauty is, then, situated over that which is shaped at the moment when, the parts having been arranged into one whole, it gives itself to the parts and to the wholes. Whenever beauty takes hold of something that is one and uniform in its parts, it gives the same thing to the whole. It is, in a way, like art, that sometimes gives beauty to a whole house along with its parts and sometimes like some nature that gives beauty to a single stone. Thus, a body comes to be beautiful by its association with an expressed principle coming from the divine [Forms].

§3. The power [in the soul]⁶ corresponding to beauty recognizes it, and there is nothing more authoritative in judging its own concerns, especially when the rest of the soul judges along with it. Perhaps the rest of the soul also expresses itself by bringing into concord the beautiful object with the form inside itself, using that for judgment like a ruler used to judge the straightness of something.

But how does the beauty in the body harmonize with that which is prior to body? How can the architect, harmonizing the external house with the form of the house internal to him, claim that the former is beautiful? In fact, it is because the external house is, apart from the stones, the inner form divided by the external mass of matter. Being in fact undivided, it appears divided into

many parts. Then, whenever sense-perception sees the form in the bodies binding together and mastering the contrary nature, which is shapeless – that is, whenever it sees an overarching shape on top of other shapes – it gathers together as one that which was in many places and brings it back and collects it into the soul's interior as something without parts and at that moment gives it to the interior [judging power of the soul] as something having the harmony and concord that is dear to it. This is just as when a good man sees in the fresh face of a youth a trace of the virtue that is in harmony with the truth that is inside himself.

The simple beauty of a color resides in shape and in the mastery of the darkness in matter by the presence of incorporeal light and of an expressed principle and a form. This is the reason why fire itself, among all the other bodies, is beautiful: it has the role of form in relation to the other elements, highest in position, finest of the other bodies, being as close as possible to the incorporeal, and alone is not receptive of the other [elements], though the others receive it. For it heats them, but is itself not cooled, and is primarily colored, whereas the others get the form of color from it. So it shines and glows as if it were form. That [color] which fades in a fire's light, unable to master [the matter], is no longer beautiful, since it does not partake of the whole form of the color. As for the imperceptible harmonies in sounds that make the perceptible ones, they make the soul grasp them so as to have comprehension of beauty in the same way, showing the same thing in another way.

It is logical that perceptible harmonies be measured by numbers, though not by every formula but only by one that serves in the production of form for the purpose of mastering. And so regarding perceptible beauties, which are reflections and shadows that come to matter as if they were making a dash there to beautify it and thrill us when they appear, enough said.

§4. Regarding the more elevated beauties that sense-perception is not fated to see, soul sees them and speaks about them without the instruments of sense-perception, but it has to ascend to contemplate them, leaving sense-perception down below. But just as in the case of the beauties perceived by the senses, it is not possible to speak about them to those who have not seen them or

to those who have never grasped them for what they are, for example, those who have been blind since birth; in the same way, it is not possible to speak about the beauty of practices to those who have not accepted their beauty nor that of types of knowledge and other such things. Nor can one speak about the “splendor” of virtue to those who have not even imagined for themselves the beauty of the visage of justice and self-control, “not even the evening nor the morning star are so beautiful.”

But such a sight must be reserved for those who see it with that in the soul by which it sees such things, and seeing it are delighted and shocked and overwhelmed much more than in the previous cases, since we are now speaking of those who have already got hold of true beauties. For these are the emotions one should experience in regard to that which is [truly] beautiful: astonishment, and a sweet shock, and longing, and erotic thrill, and a feeling of being overwhelmed with pleasure. It is possible to have these emotions, and practically all souls do have them in regard to all the unseen beauties, so to say, but in particular those souls who are more enamored of these. It is the same with regard to the [beautiful] bodies that all can see, though not everyone is “stung” equally by their beauty. Those who are stung especially are those who are called “lovers.”

§5. We should next ask those who are enamored of the beauties not available to the senses: “What is it you experience in regard to the practices said to be beautiful and to beautiful ways of being in the world and to self-controlled characters and, generally, to the products of virtue and dispositions, I mean the beauty of souls?” And “When you see your own ‘interior beauty,’ what do you feel?” And “Can you describe the frenzied and excited state you are in and your longing to be with your [true] selves, when extricating yourselves from your bodies?” For this is how those who are truly enamored feel.

But what is it that makes them feel this way? It is not shapes or colors or some magnitude, but rather they feel this way about soul, it being itself “without color” and having self-control that is also without color and the rest of the “splendor” of virtues. You feel this way whenever you see in yourselves or someone else greatness of soul or a just character or sheer self-control or the

awe-inspiring visage of courage or dignity and reserve circling around a calm and untroubled disposition with divine intellect shining on them all.

So, we love and are attracted to these qualities, but what do we mean when we say that they are beautiful? For they are real and appear to us so, and no one who has ever seen them says anything else but that they are really real. What does "really real" mean? In fact, it means that they are beautiful things. But the argument still needs to show why real things have made the soul that of which they are enamored. What is that striking thing shining on all the virtues like a light?

Would you like to consider the opposites, the ugly things that come to be in the soul, and contrast them with the beauties? For perhaps a consideration of what ugliness is and why it appears as such would contribute to our achieving what we are seeking. Well, then, let there be an ugly soul, one that is unrestrained and unjust, filled with all manner of appetites and every type of dread, mired in fear owing to cowardice and envy owing to pettiness, thinking that everything it can think of is mortal and base, deformed in every way, a lover of impure pleasures, that is, one who lives a life in which bodily pleasures are measured by their vileness.

Shall we not say, therefore, that this very vileness supervenes on his soul just as would a beauty added to it, which both harmed it and made it impure, "mixed with much evil" no longer having a life or perceptions that are pure, but rather living a murky life by an evil adulteration that includes much death in it, no longer seeing what a soul should see, no longer even being allowed to remain in itself owing to its always being dragged to the exterior and downward into darkness?

This is what I regard as an impure soul, dragged in every direction by its chains towards whatever it happens to perceive with its senses, with much of what belongs to the body adulterating it, deeply implicating itself with the material element and, taking that element into itself owing to that adulteration that only makes it worse, it exchanges the form it has for another. It is as if someone fell into mud or slime and the beauty he had is no longer evident, whereas what is seen is what he wiped on himself from the mud or slime. But the ugliness that has been added to him has come from an alien source, and his job,

if he is again to be beautiful, is to wash it off and to be clean⁷ as he was before.

So we would be speaking correctly in saying that the soul becomes ugly by a mixture or adulteration and by an inclination in the direction of the body and matter. And this is ugliness for a soul: not being pure or uncorrupted like gold, but filled up with the earthly which, were someone to remove that from it, would just be gold and would be beautiful, isolated from other things and being just what it is itself. In the same way, the soul – being isolated from appetites, which it acquires because of that body with which it associates too much – when it is separated from other affections and is purified of what it has that is bodily, remains just what it is when it has put aside all the ugliness that comes from that other nature.

§6. For it is the case, as the ancient doctrine has it, that self-control and courage and, indeed, every virtue is a purification and is wisdom itself. For this reason, the mysteries correctly offer the enigmatic saying that one who has not been purified will lie in Hades in slime, because one who is not pure likes slime owing to his wickedness. They are like pigs that, with unclean bodies, like such things.

What would true self-control be, besides not having anything to do with the pleasures of the body and fleeing them as impure, as not belonging to one who is pure? And what is courage but the absence of fear of death? But death is the separation of the soul from the body. And this is not feared by one who loves to be isolated.⁸ And greatness of soul is contempt for the things here below. And wisdom is the process of thought consisting in a turning away from the things below, leading the soul to the things above.

The soul, then, when it is purified, becomes a form, and an expressed principle, and entirely incorporeal and intellectual and wholly divine, which is the source of beauty and of all things that have an affinity to it. Soul then, being borne up to Intellect, becomes even more beautiful. And Intellect and the things that come from Intellect are soul's beauty, since they belong to it, that is, they are not alien to it, because it is then really soul alone.⁹ For this reason, it is correctly said that goodness and being beautiful for the soul consist in "being assimilated to god" because it is there that beauty is found as well as the rest of the destiny of real beings. Or rather, true being is

beauty personified¹⁰ and ugliness is the other nature, primary evil itself, so that for god, "good," and "beautiful" are the same, or rather goodness and beauty are the same.¹¹

In a similar way, then, we should seek out what is beautiful and good and ugly and evil. And first we should posit Beauty, which is the Good from which Intellect comes, which is identical with the Form of Beauty. And soul is beautiful by Intellect. Other things are beautiful as soon as they are shaped by soul, including the beauties in actions and in practices. And the bodies that are said to be beautiful are so as soon as soul makes them so. Since it is divine and, in a way, a part of beauty, it makes all that it grasps and masters beautiful insofar as it is possible for them to partake in beauty.

§7. We must, then, ascend to the Good, which every soul desires. If someone then has seen it, he knows what I mean when I say how beautiful it is. For it is desired as good, and the desire is for this, though the attainment of it is for those who ascend upward and revert to it and who divest themselves of the garments they put on when they descended. It is just like those who ascend to the sacred religious rites where there are acts of purification and the removal of the cloaks they had worn before they went inside naked. One proceeds in the ascent, passing by all that is alien to the god until one sees by oneself alone that which is itself alone uncorrupted, simple and pure, that upon which everything depends¹² and towards which one looks and is and lives and thinks.¹³ For it is the cause of life and intellect and being. And then if someone see this, what pangs of love will he feel, what longings and, wanting to be united with it, how would he <not> be overcome with pleasure?

For though it is possible for one who has not yet seen it to desire it as good, for one who has seen it, there is amazement and delight in beauty, and he is filled with pleasure and he undergoes a painless shock, loving with true love and piercing longing. And he laughs at other loves and is disdainful of the things he previously regarded as beautiful. It is like the experience of those who have happened upon apparitions of gods or daemons after which they can no longer look at the beauty of other bodies in the same way.

What, then, should we think if someone sees pure beauty itself by itself, not contaminated by

flesh or bodies, not on the earth or in heaven, in order that it may remain pure? For all these things are added on and have been mixed in and are not primary, rather, they come from that [the Good]. If, then, one sees that which orchestrates everything, remaining by itself while it gives everything, though it does not receive anything into itself, if he remains in sight of this and enjoys it by making himself like it, what other beauty would he need? For this, since it is itself supremely beautiful and the primary beauty, makes its lovers beautiful and lovable.

And with the Good as the prize, the greatest and "ultimate battle is set before souls," in which battle our entire effort is directed to not being deprived of the most worthy vision. And the one who attains this is "blessed," since he is seeing a blessed sight, whereas the one who does not is without luck. It is not the one who does not attain beautiful colors or bodies or power or ruling positions or a kingship who is without luck, but the one who does not attain this and this alone. For the sake of this he ought to cede the attainment of kingship and ruling positions over the whole earth, sea, and heaven, if by abandoning these things and ignoring them he could revert to the Good and see it.

§8. How, then, can we do this? What technique should we employ? How can one see the "inconceivable beauty" as it remains within the sacred temple, not venturing outside, lest the uninitiated should see it? Let he who is able go and follow inside leaving outside the sight of his eyes, not allowing himself to turn back to the splendor of the bodies he previously saw. When he does see beautiful bodies, he should not run after them, but realizing that they are images and traces and shadows, he should flee them in the direction of that of which these are images. For if someone runs towards the image, wanting to grasp it as something true like one wanting to grasp a beautiful reflection in water (as some story has it, in a riddling way, I think) and falls into the water and disappears, in the same way, the one holding on to beautiful bodies and not letting them go plunges down, not with his body but with his soul, into the depths, where there is no joy for intellect and where he stays, blind in Hades, spending time with shadows everywhere he turns.

Someone would be better advised to say "Let us flee to our beloved fatherland." But what is this

flight, and how is it accomplished? Let us set sail in the way Homer, in a riddling way, I think, tells us Odysseus did from the sorceress Circe or from Calypso. Odysseus was not satisfied to remain there, even though he had visual pleasures and passed his time with sensual beauty. Our fatherland, from where we have come, and our father are both in the intelligible world.

What is our course, and what is our means of flight? We should not rely on our feet to get us there, for our feet just take us everywhere on earth, one place after another. Nor should you saddle up a horse or prepare some sea-going vessel. You should put aside all such things and stop looking; just shut your eyes, and change your way of looking, and wake up. Everyone has this ability, but few use it.

§9. What, then, is that inner way of looking? Having just awakened, the soul is not yet able to look at the bright objects before it. The soul must first be accustomed to look at beautiful practices, then beautiful works – not those works that the arts produce, but those that men who are called “good” produce – then to look at the soul of those who produce these beautiful works.

How, then, can you see the kind of beauty that a good soul has? Go back into yourself and look. If you do not yet see yourself as beautiful, then be like a sculptor, making a statue that is supposed to be beautiful, who removes a part here and polishes a part there so that he makes the latter smooth and the former just right until he has given the statue a beautiful face. In the same way, you should remove superfluities and straighten things that are crooked, work on the things that are dark, making them bright, and not stop “working on your statue” until the divine splendor of virtue shines in you, until you see “self-control enthroned on the holy seat.”

If you have become this and have seen it and find yourself in a purified state, you have no impediment to becoming one in this way nor do you have something else mixed in with yourself, but you are entirely yourself, true light alone, neither measured by magnitude nor reduced by a circumscribing shape nor expanded indefinitely in magnitude but being unmeasured everywhere, as something greater than every measure and better than every quantity. If you see that you have become this, at that moment you have become sight, and you can be confident about

yourself, and you have at this moment ascended here, no longer in need of someone to show you. Just open your eyes and see, for this alone is the eye that sees the great beauty.

But if the eye approaches that sight bleary with evils and not having been purified or weak and, owing to cowardice, is not able to see all the bright objects, it does not see them even if someone else shows it that they are present and able to be seen. For the one who sees has an affinity to that which is seen, and he must make himself like it if he is to attain the sight. For no eye has ever seen the sun without becoming sunlike, nor could a soul ever see beauty without becoming beautiful. You must become wholly godlike and wholly beautiful if you intend to see god and beauty.

For first, the soul will come in its ascent to Intellect, and in the intelligible world it will see all the beautiful Forms and will declare that these Ideas are what beauty is.¹⁴ For all things are beautiful, owing to these by the products of Intellect, that is, by essence.¹⁵ But we say that that which “transcends” Intellect is the Idea of the Good, a nature that holds beauty in front of itself. So roughly speaking, the Good is the primary beauty. But if one distinguishes the intelligibles apart, one will say that the “place” of the Forms is intelligible beauty, whereas the Good transcends that and is the “source and principle” of beauty. Otherwise, one will place the Good and the primary beauty in the same thing. In any case, beauty is in the intelligible world.

Translator's Notes

- 1 Literally, in all that is governed by the Muses, including poetry, literature, music, and dance. Later, these also included philosophy, astronomy, and intellectual practices generally.
- 2 Moral practices that lead to the acquisition of virtues are meant here.
- 3 The word [...] indicates a reorienting of the soul in the direction of the One, away from other objects of desire.
- 4 Magnitude and number are the two species of quantity. Hence Plotinus is implying that if beauty is a type of proportion, it is not a proportion of quantities.
- 5 That is, intellect which is distinct from the soul.
- 6 Plotinus here means the “calculative” or “rational” part of the entire soul.

- 7 The word [...] indicates both physical cleanliness and moral or spiritual purity.
- 8 That is, from whatever is alien to him.
- 9 That is, when soul rises to Intellect, it realizes its true self.
- 10 Plotinus is using the term here to refer to the One, or the Good, the source of all intelligible beauty or goodness. So in a way, since the One is beyond all intelligible reality, the essence of beauty is beyond beauty.
- 11 That is, for Intellect, but also for the One or the Good itself.
- 12 It is only when one strips off in oneself all that is other than intellect and uses the "eye" of intellect alone that one sees one's dependence on the One.
- 13 To say that one "is and lives and thinks" in *relation* to the Good or the One is to indicate that these activities depend on the One.
- 14 The words here, "Forms" [...] and "Ideas" [...] are used by Plotinus synonymously.
- 15 Here, the Forms are treated as the products of Intellect, though Intellect is, in actuality, not prior to the Forms.

De Musica

St. Augustine

St. Augustine (354–430), who served as Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, was a highly influential Christian philosopher.

Book VI

x. 29 We must not hate what is below us, but rather with God's help put it in its right place, setting in right order what is below us, ourselves, and what is above us, and not being offended by the lower, but delighting only in the higher. "The soul is weighed in the balance by what delights her". Delight or enjoyment sets the soul in her ordered place. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matth. 6²¹). Where the delight is, there is the treasure; where the heart is, there is the blessedness or misery. The higher things are those in which equality resides, supreme, unshaken, unchangeable, eternal; where there is no time, because no mutability; whence, in imitation of eternity, times in our world are made, ordered, and modified, as long as the circling sky continually returns to its place of starting, recalling thither the heavenly bodies too, with the days, months, years, periods of five years, and other cycles of time which are marked by the stars, according to the laws of equality, unity, and order. So earthly things are subject to heavenly

things, seeming to associate the cycles of their own durations in rhythmic succession with the song of the great whole.

In this array there are many things which to us appear out of order and confused, because we have been attached to their order, their station in existence, according to our own limited merits, not knowing the glorious plan which Divine Providence has in operation concerning us. It is as if some one were put to stand like a statue in a corner of a fine, large house, and found that, being a part of it himself, he could not perceive the beauty of the structure. A soldier on the battlefield cannot see the dispositions of the whole army. If syllables in a poem had life and perception for just as long as their sounds lasted, the rhythmicity and beauty of the whole intricately inwoven work could not give them pleasure. They could not review and approve the whole poem, which is built of their own transient selves. God made sinful man ugly; but it was not an ugly act to make him so. Man became ugly by his own wish. He lost the whole, which, in obedience to God's laws, he once possessed, and was given his place in part of it, since he is unwilling to practise the law, and therefore is governed by the law instead. Lawful acts are just, and just acts are not essentially ugly. Even in our bad deeds there are good works of God. Man, as man, is good. Adultery is bad. But from adultery,

xi. 30

a bad act of man, is born a man, a good act of God.

xi. 31 To return, those rhythms excel by virtue of the beauty of reason, which, if we were cut off from them altogether when we incline towards the body, would cease to govern the Progressive Rhythm perceptible to sense, and to create perceptible beauties of temporal durations by bodily movement. [...] It is the same psyche which receives all these impulses, which are in fact its own, multiplying them in some sense within itself, and making them capable of being remembered. This particular power of the psyche is called memory, and it is an instrument of great assistance in the busy activities of human life.

xi. 32 Whatever things are retained by memory from movements of the psyche performed in response to the body's affects are called in Greek phantasies. [...] To treat these phantasies as things ascertained and understood is to live the life of mere opinion, the life that is set at the very point where error has entry. For such phantasies, moving within the psyche, a seething welter at the mercy of diverse and contradictory blasts from the wind of attention, come into mutual contact and from one another procreate new movements within the psyche, which are no longer things delivered by impressions from the senses, resulting from impacts delivered by bodily affects and retained afterwards by the psyche, but are now rather the images of images to which the conventional name of phantasms has been given. I think differently about my father whom I have seen and about my grandfather whom I have never seen. My thought of my father comes from memory, but my thought of my grandfather comes from mental movements arising out of other mental movements which are contained in memory. Their origin is hard to discover and to explain. I think that, if I had never seen any human bodies, I could not imagine them. Whatever I make out of anything which I have seen, I make by means of memory. There is a difference between finding a phantasy in memory and making a phantasm from memory. The power of the psyche can do all of this. But it is the greatest error to mistake even true phantasms for ascertained facts; though there is in both these classes of being something which we can without absurdity say that we know, that is, either something which we have perceived, or else something of which we can

form a mental image. I am not rash to assert that I had a father and a grandfather, but it would be utter insanity if I ventured to say that they were the very men whom my mind holds, either in phantasy or in a phantasm. There are people who follow their phantasms in headlong haste; and indeed we can say that the universal cause of false opinion is the mistake of regarding phantasies or phantasms as true facts ascertained by sense-perception. We should, of course, resist them; we must not accommodate to them our mental activity, wrongly thinking that, just because there is an element of thought in them, therefore it is by our understanding that we apprehend them.

But, if rhythm of this sort, occurring in a soul, abandoned to temporal things, has a beauty within the limitations of its own kind, even though it is only transiently that it stimulates that soul, why would Divine Providence regard this kind of beauty with jealous disapproval? This kind of beauty is formed out of our penal mortality, which, by a law of God, a law most just, we have fully deserved. But he has not so forsaken us that we cannot be recalled from carnal delight, and quickly retrace our way, for His pity stretches out its hand. Carnal delight powerfully fixes in the memory all that it derives from our treacherous senses. This intimacy between our souls and the flesh, the result of carnal affection, is called the flesh in the Divine Scriptures. The flesh wrestles with the mental part of us, and so the Apostle could say, "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Rom. 7²⁵). But when the mental part of us is uplifted to attachment to spiritual things, the impulse of this intimacy is broken; it is gradually suppressed, and then extinguished. It was stronger when we followed it; when we bridle it, it still has some strength, but it is now weaker. If we with firm steps draw back from every lascivious thought, in which there must always be a reduction of the soul's full existence, our delight in the Rhythm of Reason is restored, and our whole life is turned to God, not now receiving pleasure from the body, but giving to it a rhythm of health. This result happens because the outer man is consumed away, and the man himself is transformed into something finer.

But memory gathers not only the carnal movements of the mind that constitute the rhythm of which we have just spoken, but also

xi. 33

xii. 34

spiritual movements, which we have now shortly to treat. Being simple, they have need of fewer words: but they have the utmost need of undisturbed mental activity. That equality which we failed to find, fixed and enduring, in perceptible rhythm, but which we recognized as shadowed in it while it passed us by, would nowhere have been an object of our mind's aspiration, if somewhere it had not become known to our mind. But it cannot have been somewhere in the world of space and time. Spatial things expand, temporal things pass. Where then can it have been? Not in bodily forms, which can never be called truly equal to one another if they are fairly weighed by free judgment, nor in intervals of time, in which we never know whether something is longer or shorter in duration than something else, the inequality being unobserved by our perception. Where then is that equality at which we must be looking, if we are so led to desire equality in bodily things and their movements, and yet dare not trust them, then we consider them with care? Presumably it is in the place which is higher and finer than any bodily things, but whether that is in the soul, or above it, is obscure.

xii. 35 Our rhythmic or metric art, which is used by makers of verses, comprises certain rhythmical measurements according to which they make the verses. The measurements, that is, the rhythm, remain when the verses stop or pass. The verse or rhythm which passes is really manufactured by the rhythm which remains. The art is an active conformation of the mind of the artist. This conformation is not in the mind of any man who is unskilled, or who has forgotten the art. Now one who has forgotten a rhythm can be reminded of it by questions asked of him. The rhythm returns to his memory, but obviously not from the questioner. The man who had forgotten makes movements within the sphere of his own mental activity in response to something, and hence the forgotten thing may be restored. Can he even be reminded of the quantities of syllables, which vary in their temporal duration according to the decree of the ancients? For if these quantities had been stable, securely fixed by nature or doctrine, modern scholars would not have been committing the errors in quantity which they do commit. We cannot say that everything forgotten can be recalled to memory by questions; we could not be made by questions to remember a dinner

eaten a year ago, nor could questions recall to memory detailed quantities of syllables. The *I* of *Italia*, Italy, was made short $\cup$ in the past by the wish of some individual men. Now it is long $-$, *Ī*, *Ītalia*, made long by the wish of others. This is convention. But no one, past, present, or future, can by his wish make $1 + 2$ anything but 3, or prevent 2 from being twice 1. If one who has never learnt rhythm, that is, not one who has learnt and then forgotten it, is thoroughly questioned about it, and answers are elicited from him, then, just as arithmetical answers about 1 and 2 and the rest can be elicited by questions, so too the learner may learn the art of rhythm, except the quantities of syllables, which depend on authority. The questioner does not impart anything, but the learner acts within himself in such a way as to understand what is asked, and answers. Through this mental movement rhythm is imprinted on his faculty of mental activity, and he achieves the active conformation, which is called art.

This rhythm is immutable and eternal, with xii. 36 no inequality possible in it. Therefore it must come from God. The learner who is questioned moves inwardly to God to understand immutable truth; and unless he retains in memory the same movement which once he made, the learner cannot be recalled to an apprehension of that same immutable truth without external help.

Presumably the learner had abandoned xiii. 37 thoughts of that truth, and needed to be recalled by memory, because he was intent on something else. What distracted him from thoughts of the supreme, immutable equality, must have been either equal in value, or higher, or lower. Obviously it must have been lower. The soul admits that immutable equality exists, but also that it is itself lower than it, because it looks sometimes at this equality and sometimes at something else. Set on various objects, the soul performs a variety of temporal rhythms, with no existence in the realm of eternal and immutable things. This active conformation by which the soul first understands what are eternal things, then realizes that temporal things are inferior to them even when they are in itself, and finally knows that the higher is more to be sought than the lower, is wisdom.

The soul has, then, the power to know eternal xiii. 38 things as things to which it should cling fast, but

it has not at the same time the power to do so. To find the reason, we must observe what we notice most attentively, and for what we show great care, for that is what we love much. We love the beautiful; True, some love ugly things, the “lovers of putrefaction”, in Greek. But what matters is how much more beautiful are the things which most people like. Clearly no one loves what disgusts the perception, that is, sheer repulsiveness. Beautiful things please by proportion, and here as we have shown equality is not found only in sounds for the ear and in bodily movements, but also in visible forms, in which hitherto equality has been identified with beauty even more customarily than in sounds. Nothing can be proportionate or rhythmic without equality, with pairs of equivalent members responding to each other. All that is single must have some central place, so that equality may be preserved in the intervals extending to the central individual part from either side. Visible light has the presidency over all colours, colour of course being a source of delight in bodily forms. And in all light and all colours we aspire to something which is in harmony with our eyes. We turn away from too bright a light, and dislike looking at what is too dark, just as we shrink from too loud a sound and do not like a whisper. Nothing here depends on intervals of time, but everything on the actual sound which is here the very light of the rhythm, the sound to which silence is the contrary, just as darkness is the contrary to light. In all this we act according to our nature’s capacity, seeking according to agreeability or rejecting according to disagreeability, though we perceive that what is disagreeable to us is often agreeable to the other animals; and we are in fact here too rejoicing in what is really a code of equality, discovering that, in ways remote from our usual thinking, equivalences have yet been furnished to match on another. In smell, taste, and touch this may equally be observed, and could easily be explored, but it would take too long to unravel the secret in detail. Every perceptible thing which pleases us, pleases us by equality or similitude. Where there is equality or similitude, there is rhythmicity, for nothing is so equal or so similar to anything as one is to one.

xiii. 39 All this, as we have discovered, is not passively sustained by the soul from physical bodies, but actively performed by the soul in physical bodies.

Love of active performance, in reaction to the affects of its own body, diverts the soul from contemplation of eternal things, and care for the pleasure of perception calls its attention away. [. . .]

The general love of activity, which diverts us from truth, starts from pride, the vice which made the soul prefer to imitate God rather than to serve God. Rightly it is written in the Holy Books, “The beginning of a man’s pride is to revolt from God”, and “The beginning of all sin is pride”. [. . .] The soul by itself is nothing, or it would not have been mutable, and suffered default from its own essence. The whole quality of the soul’s existence is from God, and therefore, while it remains within its own order of being, it is enlivened in mental activity and in self-consciousness by God’s presence. Such goodness the soul has deeply within it. To become distended with pride is to move towards the external and to become empty within, that is, to exist less and less fully. To move away to what is outside is to sacrifice what is deeply inside, and to put God far away, by a distance not of space but of mental conditions.

Such a soul’s appetite is to have other souls subjected to it, not the souls of animals, which is allowed by Divine law, but rational souls, the souls that are its relatives and friends and partners under the same law. The soul has conceived the desire to behave concerning them with pride, regarding this behaviour concerning them as so much more excellent than behaviour concerning physical bodies as every soul is better than every body. But only God can act upon rational souls directly and not through the body. Yet it so transpires through our condition of sinfulness that souls are permitted to act concerning other souls, moving them by signals conveyed by the physical body of either of the souls involved, either with natural gestures, as facial expression or a nod, or by conventional indications such as words. We give orders and apply persuasion, and carry out all other actions by which souls act concerning or with other souls, by means of signs. Now it follows from the code by which we live that whatever, in pride, desires to excel all else rules not even its own parts and its own body without difficulty and pain, partly because of stupidity within itself and partly because it is depressed by the weight of mortal members. By these rhythmical

movements, by means of which souls behave in response to one another, they are diverted, through aspiration to honours and tributes of praise, from any deep understanding of that other truth, the truth that is pure and unsullied. It is only from God that a soul can win true honour. He can render it blessed, living in His presence in unseen life of righteousness and piety.

xiii. 42 Accordingly, the movements extruded by a soul in concern with what clings to itself, and in concern with other souls subject to it, are like Progressive Rhythm, for the soul is acting as if upon its own body. The movements which it extrudes, in its desire to gather souls into its flock, or to subject them to itself, are counted among Occursive Rhythm. For the soul is acting virtually in the realm of the senses, straining, to compel something, which is fetched to it from outside, to become one with itself, or alternatively, if it cannot become one with itself, to repel it. Memory now gathers both kinds of movement, and renders them recordable, that is, capable of being recollected, as the phantasies and phantasms of past actions, in a seething welter. Involved with this is something which can be called a "Weighing Rhythm", whose task is to discern which activities prove convenient to the active soul and which inconvenient. This rhythm we should not be sorry to call "Perceptive Rhythm", for it consists of the perceptible indications by means of which souls behave in response to other souls. When a soul is involved with all these serious distractions, it is scarcely surprising if it is diverted from the contemplation of truth, only possible for it in so far as it has respite from them. It is not allowed to remain in the truth, because it has not won final victory over them. That is why the soul has not inherently and simultaneously both the power to know on what it should take its stand and also the power to do so.

xiv. 43 After thus considering, as well as we could, how the soul is tainted with defilement and weighted by its load, it remains for us to see that action is commanded of the soul by Divine authority, so that through such action it may be purged and unburdened, and may then fly back to peace, and may enter into the joy of its Lord. But of course the Holy Scriptures, with the authority that is theirs, are all the time telling us to love God, our Lord, from our whole heart, our

whole soul, and our whole mind, and our neighbour, as ourself. So there is scarcely much for us to say. If we were to refer all the movements of human action and all the rhythms, which we have examined, to this great end, without doubt we shall be cleansed. Yet on the other hand the difficulty of practical obedience is as great as the time taken to hear the command is short.

It is easy to love colours, musical sounds, xiv. 44 cakes, roses and the body's soft, smooth surface. In all of them the soul is in quest of nothing except equality and similitude, and even when it reflects with some thoughtfulness it scarcely detects, amid such dark shadows, the trace of it. If so, it must indeed be easy to love God. For when the soul thinks of Him, as well as it can with the wounds and the stains impeding its thoughts, even so it cannot believe that in Him there is anything unequal, or unlike Himself, or divided by space, or varied in time. Our soul delights in the construction of tall houses, and indulgence in the efforts involved in such operations. Here, if it is the proportion which is the source of pleasure, and I find nothing else that can be, all the equality and similitude discernible would be derided by the arguments of true and methodical reason. Why, then, does our soul slip from the truest citadel of equality, and then, with the mere débris which it drags from it, erect terrestrial structures instead? The reason is not the promise of Him who knows not to deceive, "For my yoke is easy" (Matth, 11³⁰). Indeed, the love of this world is far more laborious. In this world the soul looks for permanence and eternity, but never finds them, because only the lowest kind of beauty can be achieved by such transience, and whatever there is in this world which in any decree copies permanence, is transmitted through our soul by God; for an appearance, which is changeable only in time, is precedent to an appearance which is changeable both in time and in space. The Lord has taught the soul of men what they should not love. "Love not the world. . . . For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and lust of the eyes, and the pride of life <is not of the Father, but is of the world>" (I John 2¹⁵⁻¹⁶).

Now consider what kind of man he is, who xiv. 45 finds a better method with which to meet these occurrences. A man who relates, not to mere pleasure, but to the preservation of his bodily self all such rhythms whose source is in the body and

in the responses to the affects of the body, and who brings into use, the residue from such rhythms retained in the memory, and others operating from other souls in the vicinity, or extruded in order to attach to the soul those other souls, or their residue retained in memory, not for its own proud ambition to excel, but for the advantage of those other souls themselves; and who employs that other rhythm, which presides, with an examiner's control, over such rhythms of either kind which subsist in the transience of perception, not for the purpose of satisfying an unjustifiable and harmful curiosity, but only for essential proof or disproof – such a man, surely, performs every rhythm without being entrapped in their entanglements. His choice is that bodily health should not be obstructed, and he refers every action to the advantage of his neighbour, whom by the bond of nature he must love as himself. He would obviously be a great man and a great gentleman.

xiv. 46

Rhythm which does not attain the level of reason is devoid of beauty; and any love of the lower beauty defiles the soul. The soul loves not only equality but order also. It has lost its true order. But it still resides in the order of things where, and how, truest order requires it to reside. There is a difference between possessing order, and being possessed by order. The soul possesses order by itself, loving all that is higher than itself, that is, in fact, God, and also the souls that are its companions, loving them as itself. By virtue of this love it orders, that is, sets in right order, all that is lower than itself, without becoming defiled. What defiles the soul is not evil, for even the body, though it is very low in the scale, is a creature of God, and is only scorned when it is compared with the dignity of the soul. Gold is defiled even by the purest silver, if it is alloyed with it. We must not deny to rhythm which is concerned with our penal mortality its inclusion within the works of the Divine fabrication, for such rhythm is within its own kind beautiful. But we must not love such rhythm as if it could make us blessed. We must treat it as we would a plank amid the waves of the sea, not casting it away as a burden, but not embracing it and clinging to it as if we imagined it firmly fixed. We must use such rhythm well, so that eventually we may dispense with it. For love of our neighbour, a love as strong as, according to the command, it must be, is the

surest step towards an ability to cling to God; indeed, we should not only be possessed by the order which He imposes, but also possess our own order sure.

Even on the evidence of Perceptive Rhythm, the soul is proved to like order. Why else is the first foot a pyrrhic $\cup \cup$, the second an iamb $\cup -$, the third a trochee $- \cup$, and so on? It may be said that this is not a matter of intuitive perception, but of reason. Yet Perceptive Rhythm has at least the credit for the equivalence by which eight long syllables occupy the same duration as sixteen short syllables; though it prefers a mixture of long and short syllables together. Reason, in fact, judges perception. Proceleumatics $\cup \cup \cup \cup$ are reported by perception as equal to spondees $- -$. Here reason finds only a potentiality of order. Long syllables are only long by comparison with short syllables, and short syllables short by comparison with long syllables. Iambic $\cup -$ verse, however, slowly pronounced, is always in ratio 1:2, and remains iambic $\cup -$. But purely pyrrhic $\cup \cup$ verse, pronounced slowly enough, becomes spondaic $- -$, not, of course, according to any rule of grammar, but according to the requirement of music. Dactyls $- \cup \cup$ and anapaests $\cup \cup -$ remain dactyls and anapaests, on account of the comparison between long and short syllables which is always present, however long the duration in pronunciation may be. Again, at the ends and beginnings of sequences of feet, half-feet are added according to different laws, all needing to have the same ictus as the contiguous feet, and the final half-foot requiring to have sometimes two short syllables in place of one long syllable. Throughout sense-perception applies its modifications. Now here quantitative equality will not account for everything, for either choice might have been made without loss of equality. Decisions are enforced by the bond of right order. It would take too long to display here the rest of the evidence for this, which is provided by durations of time. So too perception, in dealing with visible forms, rejects some of them, for example a figure bending over too far or standing on its head, and so on, when there is no loss of equality, but there is some fault of order. In all that we perceive and in all that we make, we gradually get used to what at first we rejected. It is by order that we weave our pleasure into one. We only like what has a beginning harmoniously woven on to the middle

xiv. 47

part, and a middle part harmoniously woven on to the end.

xiv. 48

Therefore we must not place our joys in carnal pleasure, nor in honour and tributes of praise, nor in our thought for anything extrinsic to our body; for we have God within us, and there all that we love is fixed and changeless. Temporal things are with us, but we are not ourselves involved in them, and we feel no pain in being parted from all that is outside our bodies. Even our bodies themselves can be taken from us without pain, or at least without much pain, and restored where, by the death of their old nature, they may be formed anew. The concentration of the soul, fixed on some part of the body, becomes readily involved in transactions in which is no peace, and in a devotion to some private operation in neglect of universal law, though even such an operation can never be quite estranged from the totality ruled by God. Thus even he who does not love the laws is still subjected to them.

xv. 49

Now if we normally think with closest attention about immaterial, changeless things, and if it happens that, at the time, we are performing temporal rhythm in one of the kinds of bodily movement which are ordinary and quite easy, such as walking or singing, we may never notice the rhythm, though it depends on our own activity, and so, too, if we are occupied in our own vain phantasms, again we perform the rhythm, but do not notice it. Now how much more, and how much more constantly, when this "corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15⁵³), that is, when God has revived our mortal bodies, as the Apostle says, "by his Spirit that dwelleth in" us (Rom. 8¹¹), how much more, concentrated on the One God, and on truth seen perspicuous, or, as we are told, "face to face", shall we perceive, with joy, the rhythm by which we actuate our bodies with no unpeacefulness? For we can hardly be expected to believe that the soul, which can derive joy from the things which are good through its own self only, cannot derive joy from the things from which its own goodness comes.

[. . .]

xvii. 56

God has arranged that even a sinful and sorrowful soul can be moved by rhythm and can rightly perform it, even down to the lowest corruption of the flesh. So degraded, rhythm becomes less and less beautiful, but it must always

have some beauty. God is jealous of no beauty due to the soul's damnation, regression, or persistence. Number, the base of rhythm, begins from unity. It has beauty by equality and by similitude, and it has interconnection by order. All nature requires order. It seeks to be like itself, and it possesses its own safety and its own order, in spaces or in times or in bodily form, by methods of balance. We have to admit that in number and rhythm all, without exception and without limit, starting from the single origin of unity, is complete and secure, in a structure of equality and similitude and wealth of goodness, cohering from unity onwards in most intimate affection.

xvii. 57

Deus creator omnium has a pleasant rhythm for the ear, but the soul loves the sequence far more for the health and truth in it. We must not believe the dull wits, to use no harsher term, of those who say that nothing can come from nothing, for God Almighty is said to have by His act disproved it. A craftsman operates rationally with rhythm in his art, using Perceptive Rhythm in the artistic tradition, and, besides that, Progressive Rhythm, with which he makes bodily movements, according to intervals of time, or visible forms in wood, rhythmic with intervals of space. If so, surely nature, in obedience to God, can in the ultimate beginning make the wood used by the craftsman, and make it from nothing. Of course it can. The numerical or rhythmic structure of a tree is spatial, and it must be preceded by a numerical or rhythmic structure which is temporal. All growing things in the vegetable world grow by temporal dimensions, and it is from some deeply abstruse numerical system in them that they put forth their reproductive power. Such, perhaps even more truly such, is the growth of physical bodies in the animal world, where the disposition of limbs and all else is based on rhythmic intervals and equality. Every tiny particle must be distended beyond the size of an indivisible point. They are all made from elements, and the elements themselves must be made from nothing. It cannot be supposed that they contain anything of less worth or lowlier than earth. But even earth has its equality of parts, and its length, breadth, and height. In it there is a regular progression, which may be Latinized as "corrationality", from point through length to breadth and height. All is due to the

supreme eternal presidency of numerical rhythm, similitude, equality, and order. If this presidency of mathematical structure is taken from earth, nothing remains. Clearly God in the beginning made earth out of nothing at all.

xvii. 58 The specific appearance of earth, which distinguishes it from the other elements, shows a kind of unity in so far as so base an element is capable of it. No part of it is unlike the whole of it. This element occupies the lowest place, which is entirely suited to its well-being, so harmoniously are its parts interconnected. The nature of water is spread all over earth. Water is a unity, all the more beautiful and transparent on account of a yet greater similitude of its parts, on guard over its order and its security. Air has still greater unity and internal regularity than water. Finally the sky, where the totality of visible things ends, is the

highest of all the elements, and has the greatest well-being. Anything which the ministry of carnal perception can count, and anything contained in it, cannot be furnished with, or possess, any numerical rhythm in space which can be estimated, unless previously a numerical rhythm in time has preceded in silent movement. Before even that, there comes vital movement, agile with temporal intervals, and it modifies what it finds, serving the Lord of All Things. Its numerical structure is undistributed into intervals of time; the durations are supplied by potentiality; here, beyond even the rational and intellectual rhythm of blessed and saintly souls, here is the very Law of God, by which a leaf falls not, and for which the very hairs of our head are numbered; and, no nature intervening, they transmit them to the law of earth, and the law below.

On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology

St. Bonaventure

St. Bonaventure (ca. 1217–74), an Italian philosopher and theologian, sought to reconcile the thought of Aristotle with that of St. Augustine, while maintaining that the culmination of wisdom is found in contemplation of God.

1. *Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights*, James in the first chapter of his Epistle. These words of Sacred Scripture not only reveal the source of all illumination but they likewise point out the generous flow of manifold rays which issue from the Fount of light. Notwithstanding the fact that every illumination of knowledge is within, still, we can with propriety distinguish what we may call the *external* light, or the light of mechanical skill; the *lower* light, or the light of sense perception; the *inner* light, or the light of philosophical knowledge; and the *higher* light, or the light of grace and of Sacred Scripture. The first light illumines the consideration of the *arts and crafts*; the second, in regard to *natural form*; the third, in regard to *intellectual truth*; the fourth and last, in regard to *saving truth*.

2. The first light, then since it enlightens the mind for an appreciation of the *arts and crafts*, which are, as it were, exterior to man and intended to supply the needs of the body, is called the light of *mechanical skill*. Being, in a certain sense, servile and of a lower nature than philosophical knowledge, this light can rightly be termed *external*. It has seven divisions corresponding to the seven mechanical arts enumerated by Hugh in his *Disdascalion*, namely, weaving, armor-making, agriculture, hunting, navigation, medicine, and the dramatic art. That the above mentioned arts *suffice* for all the needs of mankind is shown in the following way: every mechanical art is intended for man's *consolation* or his *comfort*; its purpose, therefore, is to banish either *sorrow* or *want*; it either *benefits* or *delights*, according to the words of Horace

Either to serve or to please is the wish of the poets.

And again:

He hath gained universal applause who hath combined the profitable with the pleasing.

St. Bonaventure, from *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology: De reductione atrium ad theologiam*, 1955, Sections 1–5, 8–11, 13–18. © 1995 The Sisters of St Joseph, Erie PA. Reproduced with permission of The Sisters of St Joseph, Erie PA.

If its aim is to afford *consolation* and amusement, it is *dramatic art*, or the art of exhibiting plays, which embraces every form of entertainment, be it song, music drama, or pantomime. If, however, it is intended for the *comfort* or betterment of the exterior man, it can accomplish its purpose by providing either *covering* or *food*, or by *serving as an aid in the acquisition of either*. In the matter of *covering*, if it provides a soft and light material, it is weaving; if, a strong and hard material, it is *armor-making* or metal-working, an art which extends to every tool or implement fashioned of iron or of any metal whatsoever, of stone, or of wood.

In the matter of food, mechanical skill may benefit in two ways, for we derive our sustenance from *vegetables* and from *flesh meats*. If it supplies us with *vegetables*, it is *farming*; if it provides us with *flesh meats*, it is *hunting*. Or, again, as regards *food*, mechanical skill has a twofold advantage: either it aids in the *production* and multiplication of crops, in which case it is agriculture, or in various ways of *preparing* food under which aspect it is hunting, an art which extends to every conceivable way of preparing foods, drinks, and delicacies – a task with which bakers, cooks, and innkeepers are concerned. The term “hunting” (*venatio*), however, is derived from one single aspect of the trade, undoubtedly, on account of the excellent nature of game and the popularity of the chase at court.

Furthermore, as an aid in the *acquisition of each of these necessities*, the mechanical arts contribute to the welfare of man in two ways: either by *supplying a want*, and in this case it is *navigation*, which includes all commerce of articles of covering or of food; or by *removing impediments* and ills of the body, under which aspect it is *medicine*, whether it is concerned with the preparation of drugs, potions, or ointments, with the healing of wounds or with the amputation of members, in which latter case it is called surgery. Dramatic art, on the other hand, is in a class by itself. Considered in this light, the classification of the mechanical arts seems adequate.

3. The second light, which enables us to discern *natural forms*, is the light of *sense perception*. Rightly is it called the *lower* light because sense perception begins with a material object and takes place by the aid of corporeal light. It has five divisions corresponding to the five senses.

In his third book on Genesis, St. Augustine in the following way bases the *adequacy* of the senses on the nature of the light present in the elements: if the light or brightness, which makes possible the discernment of things corporeal, exists in a *high degree of its own property* and in a certain purity, it is the sense of *sight*; *commingled with the air*, it is *hearing*; *with vapor*, it is *smell*; *with a fluid of the body*, it is *taste*; *with a solid earthy substance*, it is *touch*. Now the sensitive life of the body partakes of the nature of light for which reason it thrives in the nerves which are naturally unobstructed and capable of transmitting impressions, and in these five sense it possesses more or less vigor according to the greater or less soundness of the nerves. Therefore, since there are in the world five simple substances, namely, the four elements and the fifth essence, man has for the perception of all these corporeal forms five senses well adapted to these substances, because, on account of the well-defined nature of each sense, apprehension can take place only when there is a certain conformity and rapport between the faculty and the object. There is another way of determining the adequacy of the senses, but St. Augustine sanctions this method and it seems reasonable since corresponding elements on the part of the faculty, the medium, and the object lend joint support to the proof.

4. The third light which guides man in the investigation of *intelligible truths* is the light of *philosophical knowledge*. It is called *inner* because it inquires into inner and hidden causes through principles of knowledge and natural truth, which are inherent in man. It is a threefold light diffusing itself over the three divisions of philosophy: *rational, natural, and moral*, a classification which seems suitable, since there is truth of *speech*, truth of *things*, and truth of *morals*. *Rational* philosophy considers the truth of *speech*; *natural* philosophy, the truth of *things*; and *moral* philosophy, the truth of *conduct*. Or considering it in a different light: just as we believe that the principle of the efficient, the formal or exemplary, and the final cause exists in the Most High God, since “He is the Cause of being the Principle of knowledge, and the Pattern of human life,” so do we believe that it is contained in the illumination of philosophy which enlightens the mind to discern the *causes of being* in which case it is physics; or to understand *principles of reasoning* in which case

it is *logic*; or to learn the *right way of living* in which case it is *moral* or practical philosophy. Considering it under its third aspect: the light of philosophical knowledge illumines the intellect itself and this enlightenment may be threefold: if it governs the *motive*, it is *moral* philosophy; if it sways the *reason*, it is *natural* philosophy; if it directs the *interpretation*, it is *discursive* philosophy. As a result, man is enlightened as regards the truth of life, the truth of knowledge, and the truth of doctrine.

And since one may, through the medium of *speech*, give expression to his thoughts with a threefold purpose in view: namely, to communicate his ideas, to propose something for belief, or to arouse love or hatred, for this reason, *discursive* or rational philosophy has three subdivisions: *grammar*, *logic*, and *rhetoric*. Of these sciences the first aims to express; the second, to teach; the third, to persuade. The first considers the mind as *apprehending*; the second as *judging*; the third, as *motivating*, and since the mind apprehends by means of *correct speech*, with good reason does this triple science consider these three qualities in speech.

Again, since our intellect must be guided in its judgment by fixed principles, these principles, likewise, must be considered under three aspects: when they pertain to *matter*, they are termed *formal causes*; when they pertain to the *mind*, they are termed *intellectual causes*; and when they pertain to *Divine Wisdom*, they are called *ideal causes*; Natural philosophy, therefore, is subdivided into *physics properly so-called*, into *mathematics*, and *metaphysics*. Physics, accordingly treats of the knowledge of all entities, which leads back to one ultimate Principle from which they proceeded according to ideal causes, that is, to God since He is the *Beginning*, the *End*, and the *Exemplar*. Concerning these ideal causes, however, there has been some controversy among metaphysicists.

Finally, since there are three standards of ethical principles, namely, those governing the *individual*, the *family*, and the *state*, so are there three corresponding divisions of moral philosophy; namely, *ethical*, *economic*, and *political*, the content of each being clearly indicated by its name.

5. Now the fourth light, which illumines the mind for the understanding of *saving truth*, is the

light of *Sacred Scripture*. This light is called *higher* because it leads to things above by the manifestation of truths which are beyond reason and also because it is not acquired by human research, but comes down by inspiration from the "*Father of lights*." Although in its literal sense, it is *one*, still, in its spiritual and mystical sense, it is *threefold*, for in all the books of Sacred Scripture, in addition to the *literal* meaning which the words clearly express, there is implied a threefold *spiritual* meaning: namely, the *allegorical*, by which we are taught what to believe concerning the Divinity and humanity; the *moral* by which we are taught how to live; and the *anagogical* by which we are taught how to keep close to God. Hence all of Sacred Scripture teaches these three truths: namely, the eternal generation and Incarnation of Christ, the pattern of human life, and the union of the soul with God. The first regards *faith*; the second, *morals*; the third, the *purpose of both*. To the study of the first, the doctors should devote themselves; on that of the second, the preachers should concentrate; and to the attainment of the third, the contemplatives should aspire. . . .

8. Let us see, therefore, how the other illuminations of knowledge are to be reduced to the light of Sacred Scripture. First of all, let us consider the illumination of *sense* perception, which is concerned exclusively with the cognition of sensible objects, a process in which three phases are to be considered: namely, the *medium* of perception, the *exercise* of perception, and the *delight* of perception. If we consider the *medium* of perception, we shall see therein the Word begotten from all eternity and made man in time. Indeed, a sensible object can make an impression upon a cognitive faculty only through the medium of a likeness which proceeds from the object as an offspring from its parent, and in every sensation, this likeness must be present either generically, specifically, or symbolically. That likeness, however, results in actual sensation only if it is brought into contact with the organ and the faculty, and once that contact is established, there results a new percept, an expressed image by means of which the mind reverts to the object. And even though the object is not always present to the senses, still, the fact remains that perception in its finished form begets an image. In like manner, know that from the mind of the Most High, Who is knowable by the interior senses of the mind,

from all eternity there emanated a Likeness, an Image, and an Offspring; and afterwards, when "the fullness of time had come" he was united to a mind and body and assumed the form of man which He had never been before, and through Him all our minds, which bear the likeness of the Father through faith in our hearts, are brought back to God.

9. To be sure, if we consider the *exercise* of sense perception, we shall see therein the pattern of human life, for each sense applies itself to its own object, shrinks from what may harm it, and does not appropriate the object of any other sense. In like manner, the *spiritual sense* operates in an orderly way, for while applied to its proper object, it opposes *negligence*; while refraining from what is harmful, it combats *concupiscence*; and while respecting the rights of other, it acts in opposition to *pride*. Of a truth, every irregularity springs from negligence, from concupiscence, or from pride. Surely, then, he who lives a prudent, temperate, and submissive life leads a well-ordered life, for thereby he avoids negligence in his duties, concupiscence in his appetites, and pride in his excellence.

10. Furthermore, if we consider the *delight*, we shall see therein the union of the soul with God. Indeed, every sense seeks its proper sensible with longing, finds it with delight, and seeks it again without ceasing, because "the eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing." In the same way, our spiritual senses must seek longingly, find joyfully, and seek again without ceasing the beautiful, the harmonious, the fragrant, the sweet, or the delightful to the touch. Behold how the divine Wisdom lies hidden in sense perception and how wonderful is the contemplation of the five spiritual senses in the light of their conformity to the senses of the body.

11. By the same process of reasoning is Divine Wisdom to be found in the illumination of the mechanical arts, the sole purpose of which is the *production of works of art*. In this illumination we can see the *eternal generation and Incarnation of the Word, the pattern of human life, and the union of the soul with God*. And this is true if we consider the *skill of the artist, the quality of the effect produced, and the utility of the advantage to be derived therefrom*.

If we consider the *production*, we shall see that the work of art proceeds from the artificer accord-

ing to a model existing in his mind; this pattern or model the artificer studies carefully before he produces and then he produces as he has predetermined. The artificer, moreover, produces an exterior work bearing the closest possible resemblance to the interior model, and if it were in his power to produce an effect which would know and love him, this he would assuredly do; and if that creature could know its maker, it would be by means of a likeness according to which it came from the hands of the artificer; and if the eyes of the understanding were so darkened that the creature could not be elevated to things above, in order to bring it to a knowledge of its maker, it would be necessary for the likeness according to which the effect was produced to lower itself even to that nature which the creature could grasp and know. In like manner, understand that no creature has proceeded from the Most High Creator except through the Eternal Word, "in Whom He ordered all things," and by which Word He produced creatures bearing not only the nature of His *vestige* but also of His *image* so that through knowledge and love, they might be united to Him. And since by sin the rational creature had dimmed the eye of contemplation, it was most fitting that the Eternal and invisible should become visible and take flesh that He might lead us back to the Father and, indeed, this is what is related in the fourteenth chapter of St. John: "No man cometh to the Father but by Me"; and in the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew: "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." For that reason, then, it is said, "The Word was made flesh." Therefore, considering the illumination of mechanical skill as regards the production of the work, we shall see therein the Word begotten and made incarnate, that is, the Divinity and the Humanity and the integrity of all faith.

13. If we consider the *effect*, we shall see therein the *pattern of human life*, for every artificer, indeed, aims to produce a work that is beautiful, useful, and enduring, and only when it possesses these three qualities is the work highly valued and acceptable. Corresponding to the above-mentioned qualities, in the pattern of life there must be found three elements: "knowledge, will, and unaltering and persevering toil." *Knowledge* renders the work beautiful; the *will* renders it useful; *perseverance* renders it lasting. The first

resides in the rational, the second in the concupiscible, and the third in the irascible appetite.

14. If we consider the *advantage*, we shall find the union of the soul with God, for every artificer who fashions a work does so that he may derive *praise*, *benefit*, or *delight* therefrom – a threefold purpose which corresponds to the three formal objects of the appetites: namely, a *noble* good, a *useful* good, and an *agreeable* good. It was for this same threefold reason that God made the soul rational, namely, that of its own accord, it might *praise* Him, *serve* Him, *find delight* in Him, and be at rest; and this takes place through charity. “He that abideth in it, abideth in God and God in him”; in such a way that there is found therein a kind of wondrous union and from that union comes a wondrous delight, for in the Book of Proverbs it is written, “My delights were to be with the children of men.” Behold how the illumination of mechanical knowledge is the path to the illumination of Sacred Scripture. There is nothing therein which does not bespeak true wisdom and for this reason Sacred Scripture quite rightly makes frequent use of such similitudes.

15. In the same way is Divine Wisdom to be found in the illumination of *rational philosophy*, the main purpose of which is concerned with *speech*. Here are to be considered three elements corresponding to the threefold consideration of speech itself: namely, as regards the *person speaking*, the *delivery* of the speech, and its final purpose or its effect upon the *hearer*.

16. Considering speech in the light of the *speaker*, we see that all speech is the expression of a *mental concept*. That inner concept is the word of the mind and its offspring which is known to the person conceiving it, but that it may become known to the hearer, it assumes the nature of the voice and clothed in that form, the intelligible word becomes sensible and is heard without; it is received into the ear of the person listening and, still, it does not depart from the mind of the person uttering it. Practically the same procedure is seen in the begatting of the Eternal Word,

because the Father conceived Him, begatting Him from all eternity, as it is written in the eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs. “The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived.” But that He might be known by man who is endowed with senses, He assumed the nature of flesh, and “the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us,” and yet He remained “in the bosom of His Father.”

17. Considering speech in the light of its *delivery*, we shall use therein the *pattern of human life*, for three essential qualities work together for the perfection of speech: namely, *propriety*, *truth*, and *ornament*. Corresponding to these three qualities, every act of ours should be characterized by *measure*, *form*, and *order* so that it may be *restrained* by propriety in its outward accomplishment, *rendered beautiful* by purity of affection, *regulated* and adorned by uprightness of intention. For then truly, does one live a correct and well-ordered life which his intention is upright, his affection pure, and his deeds unassuming.

18. Considering speech in the light of its *purpose*, we find that it aims to *express*, to *instruct*, and to *persuade*; but it never *expresses* except by means of a likeness; it never *teaches* except by means of a clear light; and it never *persuades* except by power, and it is evident that these effects are accomplished only by means of an inherent likeness, light, and power intrinsically united to the soul. Therefore, St. Augustine concludes that he alone is a true teacher who can imprint a likeness, shed light, and grant power to the heart of his hearer. Hence it is that “He that teaches within hearts has His throne in heaven.” Now, as perfection of speech requires the union of power, light, and a likeness within the soul, so, too, for the instruction of the soul in the knowledge of God by interior conversation with Him, there is required a union with Him who is “the brightness of glory and the figure of His substance, upholding all things by the word of His power.” Hence we see how wondrous is this contemplation by which St. Augustine in his many writings leads soul to Divine Wisdom.

Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times

Third Earl of Shaftesbury

The third Earl of Shaftesbury
(1671–1713) was an English philosopher
who maintained the disinterestedness of
aesthetic judgments and found in
nature both beauty and sublimity.

The Moralists

Part III, Section II

Methinks, said he, Philocles (changing to a familiar voice), we had better leave these unsociable places whither our fancy has transported us, and return to ourselves here again in our more conversable woods and temperate climates. Here no fierce heats nor colds annoy us, no precipices nor cataracts amaze us. Nor need we here be afraid of our own voices whilst we hear the notes of such a cheerful choir, and find the echoes rather agreeable and inviting us to talk.

I confess, said I, those foreign nymphs (if there were any belonging to those miraculous woods) were much too awful beauties to please me. I found our familiar home-nymphs a great deal more to my humour. Yet for all this, I cannot help being concerned for your breaking off just when we were got half the world over, and wanted only to take America in our way home. Indeed, as for Europe, I could excuse your making any

great tour there, because of the little variety it would afford us. Besides that, it would be hard to see it in any view without meeting still that politic face of affairs which would too much disturb us in our philosophical flights. But for the western tract, I cannot imagine why you should neglect such noble subjects as are there, unless perhaps the gold and silver, to which I find you such a bitter enemy, frightened you from a mother-soil so full of it. If these countries had been as bare of those metals as old Sparta, we might have heard more perhaps of the Perus and Mexicos than of all Asia and Africa. We might have had creatures, plants, woods, mountains, rivers, beyond any of those we have passed. How sorry am I to lose the noble Amazon! How sorry—

Here, as I would have proceeded, I saw so significant a smile on Theocles's face that it stopped me, out of curiosity, to ask him his thought.

Nothing, said he; nothing but this very subject itself. Go on – I see you'll finish it for me. The spirit of this sort of prophecy has seized you. And Philocles, the cold indifferent Philocles, is become a pursuer of the same mysterious beauty.

'Tis true, said I, Theocles, I own it. Your genius, the genius of the place, and the Great

Genius have at last prevailed. I shall no longer resist the passion growing in me for things of a natural kind, where neither art nor the conceit or caprice of man has spoiled their genuine order by breaking in upon that primitive state. Even the rude rocks, the mossy caverns, the irregular unwrought grottos and broken falls of waters, with all the horrid graces of the wilderness itself, as representing Nature more, will be the more engaging, and appear with a magnificence beyond the formal mockery of princely gardens. . . . But tell me, I entreat you, how comes it that, excepting a few philosophers of your sort, the only people who are enamoured in this way, and seek the woods, the rivers, or seashores, are your poor vulgar lovers?

Say not this, replied he, of lovers only. For is it not the same with poets, and all those other students in nature and the arts which copy after her? In short, is not this the real case of all who are lovers either of the Muses or the Graces?

However, said I, all those who are deep in this romantic way are looked upon, you know, as a people either plainly out of their wits, or overrun with melancholy and enthusiasm. We always endeavour to recall them from these solitary places. And I must own that often when I have found my fancy run this way, I have checked myself, not knowing what it was possessed me, when I was passionately struck with objects of this kind.

No wonder, replied he, if we are at a loss when we pursue the shadow for the substance. For if we may trust to what our reasoning has taught us, whatever in Nature is beautiful or charming is only the faint shadow of that first beauty. So that every real love depending on the mind, and being only the contemplation of beauty either as it really is in itself or as it appears imperfectly in the objects which strike the sense, how can the rational mind rest here, or be satisfied with the absurd enjoyment which reaches the sense alone?

From this time forward then, said I, I shall no more have reason to fear those beauties which strike a sort of melancholy, like the places we have named, or like these solemn groves. No more shall I avoid the moving accents of soft music, or fly from the enchanting features of the fairest human face.

If you are already, replied he, such a proficient in this new love that you are sure never to admire

the representative beauty except for the sake of the original, nor aim at other enjoyment than of the rational kind, you may then be confident. I am so, and presume accordingly to answer for myself. However, I should not be ill satisfied if you explained yourself a little better as to this mistake of mine you seem to fear. Would it be any help to tell you, "That the absurdity lay in seeking the enjoyment elsewhere than in the subject loved"? The matter, I must confess, is still mysterious. Imagine then, good Philocles, if being taken with the beauty of the ocean, which you see yonder at a distance, it should come into your head to seek how to command it, and, like some mighty admiral, ride master of the sea, would not the fancy be a little absurd?

Absurd enough, in conscience. The next thing I should do, 'tis likely, upon this frenzy, would be to hire some bark and go in nuptial ceremony, Venetian-like, to wed the gulf, which I might call perhaps as properly my own.

Let who will call it theirs, replied Theocles, you will own the enjoyment of this kind to be very different from that which should naturally follow from the contemplation of the ocean's beauty. The bridegroom-Doge, who in his stately Bucentaur floats on the bosom of his Thetis, has less possession than the poor shepherd, who from a hanging rock or point of some high promontory, stretched at his case, forgets his feeding flocks, while he admires her beauty. But to come nearer home, and make the question still more familiar. Suppose (my Philocles) that, viewing such a tract of country as this delicious vale we see beneath us, you should, for the enjoyment of the prospect, require the property or possession of the land.

The covetous fancy, replied I, would be as absurd altogether as that other ambitious one.

O Philocles! said he, may I bring this yet a little nearer, and will you follow me once more? Suppose that, being charmed as you seem to be with the beauty of those trees under whose shade we rest, you should long for nothing so much as to taste some delicious fruit of theirs; and having obtained of Nature some certain relish by which these acorns or berries of the wood became as palatable as the figs or peaches of the garden, you should afterwards, as oft as you revisited these groves, seek hence the enjoyment of them by satiating yourself in these new delights.

The fancy of this kind, replied I, would be sordidly luxurious, and as absurd, in my opinion, as either of the former.

Can you not then, on this occasion, said he, call to mind some other forms of a fair kind among us, where the admiration of beauty is apt to lead to as irregular a consequence?

I feared, said I, indeed, where this would end, and was apprehensive you would force me at last to think of certain powerful forms in human kind which draw after them a set of eager desires, wishes, and hopes; no way suitable, I must confess, to your rational and refined contemplation of beauty. The proportions of this living architecture, as wonderful as they are, inspire nothing of a studious or contemplative kind. The more they are viewed, the further they are from satisfying by mere view. Let that which satisfies be ever so disproportionable an effect, or ever so foreign to its cause, censure it as you please; you must allow, however, that it is natural. So that you, Theocles, for aught I see, are become the accuser of Nature by condemning a natural enjoyment.

Far be it from us both, said he, to condemn a joy which is from Nature. But when we spoke of the enjoyment of these woods and prospects, we understood by it a far different kind from that of the inferior creatures, who, rifling in these places, find here their choicest food. Yet we too live by tasteful food, and feel those other joys of sense in common with them. But 'twas not here (my Philocles) that we had agreed to place our good, nor consequently our enjoyment. We who were rational, and had minds, methought, should place it rather in those minds which were indeed abused, and cheated of their real good, when drawn to seek absurdly the enjoyment of it in the objects of sense, and not in those objects they might properly call their own, in which kind, as I remember, we comprehended all which was truly fair, generous, or good.

So that beauty, said I, and good with you, Theocles, I perceive, are still one and the same.

'Tis so, said he. And thus are we returned again to the subject of our yesterday's morning conversation. Whether I have made good my promise to you in showing the true good, I know not. But so, doubtless, I should have done with good success had I been able in my poetic ecstasies, or by any other efforts, to have led you into

some deep view of Nature and the sovereign genius. We then had proved the force of divine beauty, and formed in ourselves an object capable and worthy of real enjoyment.

O Theocles! said I, well do I remember now the terms in which you engaged me that morning when you bespoke my love of this mysterious beauty. You have indeed made good your part of the condition, and may now claim me for a proselyte. If there be any seeming extravagance in the case I must comfort myself the best I can, and consider that all sound love and admiration is enthusiasm: "The transports of poets, the sublime of orators, the rapture of musicians, the high strains of the virtuosi – all mere enthusiasm! Even learning itself, the love of arts and curiosities, the spirit of travellers and adventurers, gallantry, war, heroism – all, all enthusiasm!" 'Tis enough; I am content to be this new enthusiast in a way unknown to me before.

And I, replied Theocles, am content you should call this love of ours enthusiasm, allowing it the privilege of its fellow-passions. For is there a fair and plausible enthusiasm, a reasonable ecstasy and transport allowed to other subjects, such as architecture, painting, music; and shall it be exploded here? Are there senses by which all those other graces and perfections are perceived, and none by which this higher perfection and grace is comprehended? Is it so preposterous to bring that enthusiasm hither, and transfer it from those secondary and scanty objects to this original and comprehensive one? Observe how the case stands in all those other subjects of art or science. What difficulty to be in any degree knowing! How long ere a true taste is gained! How many things shocking, how many offensive at first, which afterwards are known and acknowledged the highest beauties! For 'tis not instantly we acquire the sense by which these beauties are discoverable. Labour and pains are required, and time to cultivate a natural genius ever so apt or forward. But who is there once thinks of cultivating this soil, or of improving any sense or faculty which Nature may have given of this kind? And is it a wonder we should be dull then, as we are, confounded and at a loss in these affairs, blind as to this higher scene, these nobler representations? Which way should we come to understand better? which way be knowing in these beauties? Is study, science, or learning necessary to understand all

beauties else? And for the sovereign beauty, is there no skill or science required? In painting there are shades and masterly strokes which the vulgar understand not, but find fault with; in architecture there is the rustic; in music the chromatic kind, and skilful mixture of dissonancies: and is there nothing which answers to this in the whole?

I must confess, said I, I have hitherto been one of those vulgar who could never relish the shades, the rustic, or the dissonancies you talk of. I have never dreamt of such masterpieces in Nature. 'Twas my way to censure freely on the first view. But I perceive I am now obliged to go far in the pursuit of beauty, which lies very absconded and deep; and if so, I am well assured that my enjoyments hitherto have been very shallow. I have dwelt, it seems, all this while upon the surface, and enjoyed only a kind of slight superficial beauties, having never gone in search of beauty itself, but of what I fancied such. Like the rest of the unthinking world, I took for granted that what I liked was beautiful, and what I rejoiced in was my good. I never scrupled loving what I fancied, and aiming only at the enjoyment of what I loved; I never troubled myself with examining what the subjects were, nor ever hesitated about their choice.

Begin then, said he, and choose. See what the subjects are, and which you would prefer, which honour with your admiration, love, and esteem. For by these again you will be honoured in your turn. Such, Philocles, as is the worth of these companions, such will your worth be found. As there is emptiness or fulness here, so will there be in your enjoyment. See therefore where fulness is, and where emptiness. See in what subject resides the chief excellence, where beauty reigns, where 'tis entire, perfect, absolute; where broken, imperfect, short. View these terrestrial beauties and whatever has the appearance of excellence and is able to attract. See that which either really is, or stands as in the room of fair, beautiful, and good. "A mass of metal, a tract of land, a number of slaves, a pile of stones, a human body of certain lineaments and proportions." Is this the highest of the kind? Is beauty founded then in body only, and not in action, life, or operation? [. . .]

Hold! hold! said I, good Theocles, you take this in too high a key above my reach. If you

would have me accompany you, pray lower this strain a little, and talk in a more familiar way.

Thus then, said he (smiling), whatever passion you may have for other beauties, I know, good Philocles, you are no such admirer of wealth in any kind as to allow much beauty to it, especially in a rude heap or mass. But in medals, coins, embossed work, statues, and well-fabricated pieces, of whatever sort, you can discover beauty and admire the kind. True, said I, but not for the metal's sake. 'Tis not then the metal or matter which is beautiful with you? No. But the art? Certainly. The art then is the beauty? Right. And the art is that which beautifies? The same. So that the beautifying, not the beautified, is the really beautiful? It seems so. For that which is beautified, is beautiful only by the accession of something beautifying, and by the recess or withdrawing of the same, it ceases to be beautiful? Be it. In respect of bodies therefore, beauty comes and goes? So we see. Nor is the body itself any cause either of its coming or staying? None. So that there is no principle of beauty in body? None at all. For body can no way be the cause of beauty to itself? No way. Nor govern nor regulate itself? Nor yet this. Nor mean nor intend itself? Nor this neither. Must not that, therefore, which means and intends for it, regulates and orders it, be the principle of beauty to it? Of necessity. And what must that be? Mind, I suppose, for what can it be else?

Here then, said he, is all I would have explained to you before. "That the beautiful, the fair, the comely, were never in the matter, but in the art and design; never in body itself, but in the form or forming power." Does not the beautiful form confess this, and speak the beauty of the design whenever it strikes you? What is it but the design which strikes? What is it you admire but mind, or the effect of mind? 'Tis mind alone which forms. All which is void of mind is horrid, and matter formless is deformity itself.

Of all forms then, said I, those (according to your scheme) are the most amiable, and in the first order of beauty, which have a power of making other forms themselves. From whence methinks they may be styled the forming forms. So far I can easily concur with you, and gladly give the advantage to the human form, above those other beauties of man's formation. The palaces, equipages and estates shall never in my account be brought in competition with the

original living forms of flesh and blood. And for the other, the dead forms of Nature, the metals and stones, however precious and dazzling, I am resolved to resist their splendour, and make abject things of them, even in their highest pride, when they pretend to set off human beauty, and are officiously brought in aid of the fair.

Do you not see then, replied Theocles, that you have established three degrees or orders of beauty? As how? Why first, the dead forms, as you properly have called them, which bear a fashion, and are formed, whether by man or Nature, but have no forming power, no action, or intelligence. Right. Next, and as the second kind, the forms which form, that is, which have intelligence, action, and operation. Right still. Here therefore is double beauty. For here is both the form (the effect of mind) and mind itself. The first kind low and despicable in respect of this other, from whence the dead form receives its lustre and force of beauty. For what is a mere body, though a human one, and ever so exactly fashioned, if inward form be wanting, and the mind be monstrous or imperfect, as in an idiot or savage? This too I can apprehend, said I, but where is the third order?

Have patience, replied he, and see first whether you have discovered the whole force of this second beauty. How else should you understand the force of love, or have the power of enjoyment? Tell me, I beseech you, when first you named these the forming forms, did you think of no other productions of theirs besides the dead kinds, such as the palaces, the coins, the brazen or the marble figures of men? Or did you think of something nearer life?

I could easily, said I, have added, that these forms of ours had a virtue of producing other living forms like themselves. But this virtue of theirs, I thought, was from another form above them, and could not properly be called their virtue or art, if in reality there was a superior art or something artist-like, which guided their hand, and made tools of them in this specious work.

Happily thought, said he; you have prevented a censure which I hardly imagined you could escape. And here you have unawares discovered that third order of beauty, which forms not only such as we call mere forms but even the forms which form. For we ourselves are notable

architects in matter, and can show lifeless bodies brought into form, and fashioned by our own hands, but that which fashions even minds themselves, contains in itself all the beauties fashioned by those minds, and is consequently the principle, source, and fountain of all beauty.

It seems so.

Therefore whatever beauty appears in our second order of forms, or whatever is derived or produced from thence, all this is eminently, principally, and originally in this last order of supreme and sovereign beauty.

True.

Thus architecture, music, and all which is of human invention, resolves itself into this last order.

Right, said I; and thus all the enthusiasms of other kinds resolve themselves into ours. The fashionable kinds borrow from us, and are nothing without us. We have undoubtedly the honour of being originals.

Now therefore say again, replied Theocles: whether are those fabrics of architecture, sculpture, and the rest of that sort the greatest beauties which man forms, or are there greater and better? None which I know, replied I. Think, think again, said he; and setting aside those productions which just now you excepted against, as masterpieces of another hand; think what there are which more immediately proceed from us, and may more truly be termed our issue. I am barren, said I, for this time; you must be plainer yet, in helping me to conceive. How can I help you? replied he. Would you have me be conscious for you, of that which is immediately your own, and is solely in and from yourself? You mean my sentiments, said I. Certainly, replied he, and together with your sentiments, your resolutions, principles, determinations, actions; whatsoever is handsome and noble in the kind; whatever flows from your good understanding, sense, knowledge, and will; whatever is engendered in your heart (good Philocles!) or derives itself from your parent-mind, which, unlike to other parents, is never spent or exhausted, but gains strength and vigour by producing. So you, my friend, have proved it, by many a work, not suffering that fertile part to remain idle and unactive. Hence those good parts, which from a natural genius you have raised by due improvement. And here, as I cannot but admire the pregnant genius and parent-beauty, so

am I satisfied of the offspring, that it is and will be ever beautiful.

I took the compliment, and wished (I told him) the case were really as he imagined, that I might justly merit his esteem and love. My study therefore should be to grow beautiful, in his way of beauty, and from this time forward I would do all I could to propagate that lovely race of mental children, happily sprung from such a high enjoyment and from a union with what was fairest and best. But 'tis you, Theocles, continued I, must help my labouring mind, and be as it were the midwife to those conceptions; which else, I fear, will prove abortive.

You do well, replied he, to give me the midwife's part only; for the mind conceiving of itself, can only be, as you say, assisted in the birth. Its pregnancy is from its nature. Nor could it ever have been thus impregnated by any other mind than that which formed it at the beginning; and which, as we have already proved, is original to all mental as well as other beauty.

Do you maintain then, said I, that these mental children, the notions and principles of fair, just, and honest, with the rest of these ideas, are innate?

Anatomists, said he, tell us that the eggs, which are principles in body, are innate, being formed already in the foetus before the birth. But when it is, whether before, or at, or after the birth, or at what time after, that either these or other principles, organs of sensation, or sensations themselves, are first formed in us, is a matter, doubtless, of curious speculation, but of no great importance. The question is, whether the principles spoken of are from art or Nature? If from Nature purely, 'tis no matter for the time; nor would I contend with you though you should deny life itself to be innate, as imagining it followed rather than preceded the moment of birth. But this I am certain of, that life and the sensations which accompany life, come when they will, are from mere Nature, and nothing else. Therefore if you dislike the word innate, let us change it, if you will, for instinct, and call instinct that which Nature teaches, exclusive of art, culture, or discipline.

Content, said I.

Leaving then, replied he, those admirable speculations to the virtuosi, the anatomists, and school divines, we may safely aver, with all their

consents, that the several organs, particularly those of generation, are formed by Nature. Whether is there also from Nature, think you, any instinct for the after use of them? or whether must learning and experience imprint this use? 'Tis imprinted, said I, enough in conscience. The impression or instinct is so strong in the case, that 'twould be absurdity not to think it natural, as well in our own species as in other creatures, amongst whom (as you have already taught me) not only the mere engendering of the young, but the various and almost infinite means and methods of providing for them, are all fore-known. For thus much we may indeed discern in the preparatory labours and arts of these wild creatures, which demonstrate their anticipating fancies, pre-conceptions, or pre-sensations, if I may use a word you taught me yesterday.

I allow your expression, said Theocles, and will endeavour to show you that the same pre-conceptions, of a higher degree, have place in human kind. Do so, said I, I entreat you; for so far am I from finding in myself these pre-conceptions of fair and beautiful, in your sense, that methinks, till now of late, I have hardly known of anything like them in Nature. How then, said he, would you have known that outward fair and beautiful of human kind, if such an object (a fair fleshly one) in all its beauty had for the first time appeared to you, by yourself, this morning, in these groves? Or do you think perhaps you should have been unmoved, and have found no difference between this form and any other, if first you had not been instructed?

I have hardly any right, replied I, to plead this last opinion, after what I have owned just before.

Well then, said he, that I may appear to take no advantage against you, I quit the dazzling form which carries such a force of complicated beauties, and I am contented to consider separately each of those simple beauties, which taken all together create this wonderful effect. For you will allow, without doubt, that in respect of bodies, whatever is commonly said of the unexpressible, the unintelligible, the I-know-not-what of beauty, there can lie no mystery here, but what plainly belongs either to figure, colour, motion or sound. Omitting therefore the three latter, and their dependent charms, let us view the charm in what is simplest of all, mere figure. Nor need we

go so high as sculpture, architecture, or the designs of those who from this study of beauty have raised such delightful arts. 'Tis enough if we consider the simplest of figures, as either a round ball, a cube, or dye. Why is even an infant pleased with the first view of these proportions? Why is the sphere or globe, the cylinder and obelisk preferred; and the irregular figures, in respect of these, rejected and despised?

I am ready, replied I, to own there is in certain figures a natural beauty, which the eye finds as soon as the object is presented to it.

Is there then, said he, a natural beauty of figures? and is there not as natural a one of actions? No sooner the eye opens upon figures, the ear to sounds, than straight the beautiful results and grace and harmony are known and acknowledged. No sooner are actions viewed, no sooner the human affections and passions discerned (and they are most of them as soon discerned as felt) than straight an inward eye distinguishes, and sees the fair and shapely, the amiable and admirable, apart from the deformed, the foul, the odious, or the despicable. How is it possible therefore not to own "that as these distinctions have their foundation in Nature, the discernment itself is natural, and from Nature alone"?

If this, I told him, were as he represented it, there could never, I thought, be any disagreement among men concerning actions and behaviour, as which was base, which worthy; which handsome, and which deformed. But now we found perpetual variance among mankind, whose differences were chiefly founded on this disagreement in opinion; "The one affirming, the other denying that this, or that, was fit or decent."

Even by this, then, replied he, it appears there is fitness and decency in actions; since the fit and decent is in this controversy ever pre-supposed. And whilst men are at odds about the subjects, the thing itself is universally agreed. For neither is there agreement in judgments about other beauties. 'Tis controverted "which is the finest pile, the loveliest shape or face": but without controversy 'tis allowed "there is a beauty of each kind." This no one goes about to teach: nor is it learnt by any, but confessed by all. All own the standard, rule, and measure: but in applying it to things disorder arises, ignorance prevails, interest and passion breed disturbance. Nor can it other-

wise happen in the affairs of life, whilst that which interests and engages men as good, is thought different from that which they admire and praise as honest. But with us, Philocles, 'tis better settled, since for our parts we have already decreed "that beauty and good are still the same."

I remember, said I, what you forced me to acknowledge more than once before. And now, good Theocles, that I am become so willing a disciple, I want not so much to be convinced, methinks, as to be confirmed and strengthened. And I hope this last work may prove your easiest task.

Not unless you help in it yourself, replied Theocles, for this is necessary as well as becoming. It had been indeed shameful for you to have yielded without making good resistance. To help oneself to be convinced is to prevent reason, and bespeak error and delusion. But upon fair conviction to give our heart up to the evident side, and reinforce the impression, this is to help reason heartily. And thus we may be said honestly to persuade ourselves. Show me then how I may best persuade myself.

Have courage, said he, Philocles (raising his voice), be not offended that I say, have courage! 'Tis cowardice alone betrays us. For whence can false shame be, except from cowardice? To be ashamed of what one is sure can never be shameful, must needs be from the want of resolution. We seek the right and wrong in things; we examine what is honourable, what shameful; and having at last determined, we dare not stand to our own judgment, and are ashamed to own there is really a shameful and an honourable. "Hear me" (says one who pretends to value Philocles, and be valued by him), "there can be no such thing as real valuableness or worth; nothing in itself estimable or amiable, odious or shameful. All is opinion. 'Tis opinion which makes beauty, and unmakes it. The graceful or ungraceful in things, the decorum and its contrary, the amiable and unamiable, vice, virtue, honour, shame, all this is founded in opinion only. Opinion is the law and measure. Nor has opinion any rule besides mere chance, which varies it, as custom varies; and makes now this, now that, to be thought worthy, according to the reign of fashion and the ascendant power of education." What shall we say to such a one? How represent to him his absurdity and extravagance?

Will he desist the sooner? Or shall we ask, what shame, of one who acknowledges no shameful? Yet he derides, and cries, ridiculous! By what right? what title? For thus, if I were Philocles, would I defend myself: "Am I ridiculous? As how? What is ridiculous? Everything? or nothing?" Ridiculous indeed! But something, then, something there is ridiculous; and the notion, it seems, is right, "of a shameful and ridiculous in things."

How then shall we apply the notion? For this being wrong applied, cannot itself but be ridiculous. Or will he who cries shame refuse to acknowledge any in his turn? Does he not blush, nor seem discountenanced on any occasion? If he does, the case is very distinct from that of mere grief or fear. The disorder he feels is from a sense of what is shameful and odious in itself, not of what is hurtful or dangerous in its consequences. For the greatest danger in the world can never breed shame; nor can the opinion of all the world compel us to it, where our own opinion is not a party. We may be afraid of appearing impudent, and may therefore feign a modesty. But we can never really blush for anything beside what we think truly shameful, and what we should still blush for were we ever so secure as to our interest, and out of the reach of all inconvenience which could happen to us from the thing we were ashamed of.

Thus, continued he, should I be able by anticipation to defend myself, and looking narrowly into men's lives, and that which influenced them on all occasions. I should have testimony enough to make me say within myself, "Let who will be my adversary in this opinion, I shall find him some way or other prepossessed with that of which he would endeavour to dispossess me." Has he gratitude or resentment, pride or shame? Whichever way it be, he acknowledges a sense of just and unjust, worthy and mean. If he be grateful or expects gratitude. I ask "why? and on what account?" If he be angry, if he indulges revenge, I ask "how? and in what case? Revenged of what? of a stone, or madman?" Who is so mad? "But for what? For a chance hurt? an accident against thought or intention?" Who is so unjust? Therefore there is just and unjust; and belonging to it a natural presumption or anticipation on which the resentment or anger is founded. For what else should make the wickedest of mankind often

prefer the interest of their revenge to all other interests, and even to life itself, except only a sense of wrong natural to all men, and a desire to prosecute that wrong at any rate? Not for their own sakes, since they sacrifice their very being to it, but out of hatred to the imagined wrong and from a certain love of justice, which even in unjust men is by this example shown to be beyond the love of life itself.

Thus as to pride, I ask, "why proud? why conceited? and of what? Does any one who has pride think meanly or indifferently of himself?" No; but honourably. And how this, if there be no real honour or dignity pre-supposed? For self-valuation supposes self-worth; and in a person conscious of real worth, is either no pride, or a just and noble one. In the same manner self-contempt supposes a self-meanness or defectiveness; and may be either a just modesty or unjust humility. But this is certain, that whoever is proud must be proud of something. And we know that men of thorough pride will be proud even in the meanest circumstances, and when there is no visible subject for them to be proud of. But they descry a merit in themselves which others cannot: and 'tis this merit they admire. No matter whether it be really in them, as they imagine, it is a worth still, an honour or merit which they admire, and would do, wherever they saw it, in any subject besides. For then it is, then only, that they are humbled, "when they see in a more eminent degree in others what they respect and admire so much in themselves." And thus as long as I find men either angry or revengeful, proud or ashamed, I am safe. For they conceive an honourable and dishonourable, a foul and fair, as well as I. No matter where they place it, or how they are mistaken in it, this hinders not my being satisfied "that the thing is, and is universally acknowledged; that it is of nature's impression, naturally conceived, and by no art or counter-nature to be eradicated or destroyed."

And now, what say you, Philocles (continued he), to this defence I have been making for you? 'Tis grounded, as you see, on the supposition of your being deeply engaged in this philosophical cause. But perhaps you have yet many difficulties to get over, ere you can so far take part with beauty as to make this to be your good.

I have no difficulty so great, said I, as not to be easily removed. My inclinations lead me

strongly this way, for I am ready enough to yield there is no real good beside the enjoyment of beauty. And I am as ready, replied Theocles, to yield there is no real enjoyment of beauty beside what is good. Excellent! but upon reflection I fear I am little beholden to you for your concession. As how? Because should I offer to contend for any enjoyment of beauty out of your mental way, you would, I doubt, call such enjoyment of mine absurd, as you did once before. Undoubtedly I should. For what is it should enjoy or be capable of enjoyment, except mind? or shall we say, body enjoys? By the help of sense, perhaps, not otherwise. Is beauty, then, the object of sense? Say how? Which way? For otherwise the help of sense is nothing in the case; and if body be of itself incapable, and sense no help to it to apprehend or enjoy beauty, there remains only the mind which is capable either to apprehend or to enjoy.

True, said I, but show me, then, "Why beauty may not be the object of the sense?" Show me first, I entreat you, "Why, where, or in what you fancy it may be so?" Is it not beauty which first excites the sense, and feeds it afterwards in the passion we call love? Say in the same manner, "That it is beauty first excites the sense, and feeds it afterwards in the passion we call hunger." . . . You will not say it. The thought, I perceive, displeases you. As great as the pleasure is of good eating, you disdain to apply the notion of beauty to the good dishes which create it. You would hardly have applauded the preposterous fancy of some luxurious Romans of old, who could relish a fricassee the better for hearing it was composed of birds which wore a beautiful feather or had sung deliciously. Instead of being incited by such a historical account of meats, you would be apt, I believe, to have less appetite the more you searched their origin, and descended into the kitchen science, to learn the several forms and changes they had undergone ere they were served at this elegant voluptuous table. But though the kitchen forms be ever so disgraceful, you will allow that the materials of the kitchen, such, for instance, as the garden furnishes, are really fair and beautiful in their kind. Nor will you deny beauty to the wild field, or to these flowers which grow around us on this verdant couch. And yet, as lovely as are these forms of Nature, the shining grass or silvered moss, the flowery thyme, wild

rose or honeysuckle; 'tis not their beauty allures the neighbouring herds, delights the browsing fawn or kid, and spreads the joy we see amidst the feeding flocks; 'tis not the form rejoices, but that which is beneath the form; 'tis savouriness attracts, hunger impels, and thirst better allayed by the clear brook than the thick puddle, makes the fair nymph to be preferred, whose form is otherwise slighted. For never can the form be of real force where it is uncontemplated, unjudged of, unexamined, and stands only as the accidental note or token of what appeases provoked sense, and satisfies the brutish part. Are you persuaded of this, good Philocles? or, rather than not give brutes the advantage of enjoyment, will you allow them also a mind and rational part?

Not so, I told him.

If brutes, therefore, said he, be incapable of knowing and enjoying beauty, as being brutes, and having sense only (the brutish part) for their own share, it follows "that neither can man by the same sense or brutish part conceive or enjoy beauty; but all the beauty and good he enjoys is in a nobler way, and by the help of what is noblest, his mind and reason." Here lies his dignity and highest interest, here his capacity toward good and happiness. His ability or incompetency, his power of enjoyment or his impotence, is founded in this alone'. As this is sound, fair, noble, worthy, so are its subjects, acts and employments. For as the riotous mind, captive to sense, can never enter in competition, or contend for beauty with the virtuous mind of reason's culture; so neither can the objects which allure the former compare with those which attract and charm the latter. And when each gratifies itself in the enjoyment and possession of its object, how evidently fairer are the acts which join the latter pair, and give a soul the enjoyment of what is generous and good? This at least. Philocles, you will surely allow, that when you place a joy elsewhere than in the mind, the enjoyment itself will be no beautiful subject, nor of any graceful or agreeable appearance. But when you think how friendship is enjoyed, how honour, gratitude, candour, benignity, and all internal beauty; how all the social pleasures, society itself, and all which constitutes the worth and happiness of mankind; you will here surely allow beauty in the act, and think it worthy to be viewed and passed in review often by the glad mind, happily conscious of the generous

part, and of its own advancement and growth in beauty.

Thus, Philocles (continued he, after a short pause), thus have I presumed to treat of beauty before so great a judge, and such a skilful admirer as yourself. For, taking rise from Nature's beauty, which transported me, I gladly ventured further in the chase, and have accompanied you in search of beauty, as it relates to us, and makes our highest good in its sincere and natural enjoyment. And if we have not idly spent our hours, nor ranged in vain through these deserted regions, it should appear from our strict search that there is nothing so divine as beauty, which belonging not to body, nor having any principle or existence except in mind and reason, is alone discovered and acquired by this diviner part, when it inspects itself, the only object worthy of itself. For whatever is void of mind, is void and darkness to the mind's eye. This languishes and grows dim whenever detained on foreign subjects, but thrives and attains its natural vigour when employed in contemplation of what is like itself. 'Tis thus the improving mind, slightly surveying other objects, and passing over bodies and the common forms (where only a shadow of beauty rests), ambitiously presses onward to its source, and views the original of form and order in that which is intelligent. And thus, O Philocles, may we improve and become artists in the kind; learning "to know ourselves, and what that is, which by improving, we may be sure to advance our worth and real self-interest." For neither is this knowledge acquired by contemplation of bodies, or the outward forms, the view of pageantries, the study of estates and honours; nor is he to be esteemed that self-improving artist who makes a fortune out of these, but he (he only) is the wise and able man, who with a slight regard to these things,

applies himself to cultivate another soil, builds in a different matter from that of stone or marble; and having righter models in his eye, becomes in truth the architect of his own life and fortune, by laying within himself the lasting and sure foundations of order, peace, and concord. [. . .] But now 'tis time to think of returning home. The morning is far spent. Come! let us away and leave these uncommon subjects, till we retire again to these remote and unfrequented places.

At these words Theocles, mending his pace, and going down the hill, left me at a good distance, till he heard me calling earnestly after him. Having joined him once again, I begged he would stay a little longer, or if he were resolved so soon to leave both the woods and that philosophy which he confined to them, that he would let me, however, part with them more gradually, and leave the best impression on me he could against my next return. For as much convinced as I was, and as great a convert to his doctrine, my danger still, I owned to him, was very great. and I foresaw that when the charm of these places and his company was ceased, I should be apt to relapse and weakly yield to that too powerful charm, the world. Tell me, continued I, how is it possible to hold out against it and withstand the general opinion of mankind, who have so different a notion of that which we call good? Say truth now, Theocles, can anything be more odd or dissonant from the common voice of the world than what we have determined in this matter?

Whom shall we follow, then? replied he. Whose judgment or opinion shall we take concerning what is good, what contrary? If all or any part of mankind are consonant with themselves, and can agree in this, I am content to leave philosophy and follow them. If otherwise, why should we not adhere to what we have chosen?

An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue

Francis Hutcheson

Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), a British philosopher who held a professorship at the University of Glasgow, argued that just as we have a moral sense, so we have a sense of beauty.

The Preface

There is no part of philosophy of more importance than a just knowledge of human nature and its various powers and dispositions. Our late inquiries have been very much employed about our understanding and the several methods of obtaining truth. We generally acknowledge that the importance of any truth is nothing else than its moment or its efficacy to make men happy or to give them the greatest and most lasting pleasure; and wisdom denotes only a capacity of pursuing this end by the best means. It must surely then be of the greatest importance to have distinct conceptions of this end itself, as well as of the means necessary to obtain it, so that we may find out which are the greatest and most lasting pleasures and, thus, not employ our reason, after all our laborious improvements of it, in trifling pursuits. Indeed, it is to be feared that without this inquiry most of our studies will be of very little use to us, for they seem to have scarcely any

other tendency than to lead us into speculative knowledge itself. Nor are we distinctly told how it is that knowledge, or truth, is pleasant to us.

This consideration put the author of the following papers upon inquiring into the various pleasures which human nature is capable of receiving. We shall generally find in our modern philosophic writings nothing further on this head than some bare division of them into sensible, and rational, and some trite commonplace arguments to prove the latter more valuable than the former. Our sensible pleasures are slightly passed over and explained only by some instances in tastes, smells, sounds, or such like, which men of any tolerable reflection generally look upon as very trifling satisfactions. Our rational pleasures have had much the same kind of treatment. We are seldom taught any other notion of rational pleasure than that which we have upon reflecting on our possession, or claim to those objects, which may be occasions of pleasure. Such objects we call advantageous. But advantage, or interest, cannot be distinctly conceived, till we know what those pleasures are which advantageous objects are apt to excite, and what senses or powers of perception we have with respect to such objects.

We may perhaps find such an inquiry of more importance in morals, to prove what we call the reality of virtue, or that it is the surest happiness of the agent, than one would at first imagine.

In reflecting upon our external senses, we plainly see that our perceptions of pleasure, or pain, do not depend directly on our will. Objects do not please us, according as we incline they should. The presence of some objects necessarily pleases us, and the presence of others necessarily displeases us. Nor by our will, do we procure pleasure or avoid pain except by procuring the former kinds of objects and avoiding the latter. By the very frame of our nature, the one is made the occasion of delight, and the other of dissatisfaction.

The same observation will hold in all our other pleasures and pains. For there are many other sorts of objects which please, or displease, us as necessarily as material objects do when they operate upon our organs of sense. There is scarcely any object which our minds are employed about which is not thus constituted the necessary occasion of some pleasure or pain. Thus we find ourselves pleased with a regular form, a piece of architecture or painting, a composition of notes, a theorem, an action, an affection, a character. And we are conscious that this pleasure necessarily arises from the contemplation of the idea, which is then present in our minds with all its circumstances, even though some of these ideas have nothing of what we call sensible perception in them. And in those which have, the pleasure arises from some uniformity, order, arrangement, or imitation, not from the simple ideas of color, sound, or mode of extension separately considered.

These determinations to be pleased with any forms, or ideas which occur to our observation, are what the author chooses to call senses distinguishing them from the powers which commonly go by that name by calling our power of perceiving the beauty of regularity, order, harmony an internal sense. And the determination to be pleased with the contemplation of those affections, actions, or characters of rational agents which we call virtuous is what he marks by the name of a moral sense.

His principal design is to show "That human nature was not left quite indifferent in the affair of virtue, to form to itself observations concern-

ing the advantage, or disadvantage of actions, and accordingly to regulate its conduct." The weakness of our reason, and the avocations arising from the infirmity and necessities of our nature, are so great that very few men could ever have formed those long deductions of reason which show some actions to be in the whole advantageous to the agent, and their contraries pernicious. The author of nature has much better furnished us for a life of virtuous conduct than our moralists seem to imagine by almost as quick and powerful instructions as we have for the preservation of our bodies. He has made virtue a lovely form, to excite our pursuit of it, and has given us strong affections to be springs of each virtuous action.

This moral sense of beauty in actions and affections may appear strange at first view. Some of our moralists themselves are offended at it in my Lord Shaftesbury, so accustomed are they to deduce every approbation, or aversion, from rational views of interest (except it be merely in the simple ideas of the external senses) and have such a horror at innate ideas, which they imagine this borders upon. But this moral sense has no relation to innate ideas, as will appear in the second treatise. Our gentlemen of good taste can tell us of a great many senses, tastes, and relishes for beauty, harmony, imitation in painting and poetry. And may not we find too in mankind a relish for a beauty in characters, in manners? I doubt we have made philosophy, as well as religion, by our foolish management of it, so austere and ungainly a form that a gentleman cannot easily bring himself to like it, and those who are strangers to it can scarcely bear to hear our description of it. So much is it changed from what was once the delight of the finest gentlemen among the ancients and their recreation after the hurry of public affairs!

In the first treatise, the author has perhaps in some instances gone too far in supposing a greater agreement of mankind in their sense of beauty than experience will confirm, but all he is solicitous about is to show "That there is some sense of beauty natural to men; that we find as great an agreement of men in their relishes of forms, as in their external senses which all agree to be natural; and that pleasure or pain, delight or aversion, are naturally joined to their perceptions." If the reader is convinced of such

determinations of the mind to be pleased with forms, proportions, resemblances, and theorems, it will be no difficult matter to apprehend another superior sense, natural also to men, determining them to be pleased with actions, characters, and affections. This is the moral sense, which makes the subject of the second treatise.

The proper occasions of perception by the external senses occur to us as soon as we come into the world, whence perhaps we easily look upon these senses to be natural, but the objects of the superior senses of beauty and virtue generally do not. It is probably some little time before children reflect, or at least let us know that they reflect, upon proportion and similitude, upon affections, characters, and tempers, or come to know the external actions which are evidences of them. Hence we imagine that their sense of beauty, and their moral sentiments of actions, must be entirely owing to instruction and education, whereas it is as easy to conceive how a character or a temper, as soon as it is observed, may be constituted by nature the necessary occasion of pleasure or an object of approbation, as a taste or a sound, though it be sometime before these objects present themselves to our observation.

Sect. I Concerning some Powers of Perception, Distinct from What Is Generally Understood by Sensation

To make the following observations understood, it may be necessary to introduce some definitions and observations, either universally acknowledged or sufficiently proved by many writers both ancient and modern, concerning our perceptions called sensations and the actions of the mind consequent upon them.

1. Those ideas which are raised in the mind upon the presence of external objects, and their acting upon our bodies, are called sensations. We find that the mind in such cases is passive and has not power directly to prevent the perception or idea or to vary it at its reception, as long as we continue our bodies in a state fit to be acted upon by the external object.

2. When two perceptions are entirely different from each other, or agree in nothing but the general idea of sensation, we call the powers of receiving those different perceptions different

senses. Thus seeing and hearing denote the different powers of receiving the ideas of colors and sounds. And, although colors have vast differences among themselves, as also have sounds, there is a great agreement among the most opposite colors than between any color and a sound; hence, we call all colors perceptions of the same sense. **All the several senses seem to have their distinct organs, except feeling, which is in some degree diffused over the whole body.**

3. The mind has a power of compounding ideas which were received separately, of comparing their objects by means of the ideas, and of observing their relations and each of the simple ideas which might perhaps have been impressed jointly in the sensation. This last operation we commonly call abstraction.

4. The ideas of substances are compounded of the various simple ideas jointly impressed when they presented themselves to our senses. We define substances only by enumerating these sensible ideas. And such definitions may raise an idea clear enough of the substance in the mind of one who never immediately perceived the substance, provided he has separately received by his senses all the simple ideas which are in the composition of the complex one of the substance defined. But if there be any simple ideas which he has not received, or if he lacks any of the senses necessary for the perception of them, no definition can raise any simple idea which has not been before perceived by the senses.

5. Hence it follows "That, when instruction, education, or prejudice of any kind raise any desire or aversion toward an object, this desire or aversion must be founded upon an opinion of some perfection or of some deficiency in those qualities for perception of which we have the proper senses." Thus if beauty be desired by one who has not the sense of sight, the desire must be raised by some apprehended regularity of figure, sweetness of voice, smoothness, softness, or some other quality perceivable by the other senses without relation to the ideas of color.

6. Many of our sensitive perceptions are pleasant, and many are painful, immediately, without any knowledge of the cause of this pleasure or pain, or the means by which the objects excite it or are the occasions of it, or our seeing to what further advantage or detriment the use of such objects might tend. And the most accurate

knowledge of these things would vary neither the pleasure nor pain of the perception, however it might give a rational pleasure distinct from the sensible or might raise a distinct joy, from a prospect of further advantage in the object, or aversion, from an apprehension of evil.

7. The simple ideas raised in different persons by the same object are probably in some way different, when they disagree in their approbation or dislike, and in the same person, when his fancy at one time differs from what it was at another. This will appear from reflecting on those objects to which we have now an aversion though they were formerly agreeable. And we shall generally find that there is some accidental conjunction of a disagreeable idea which always recurs with the object, as in those wines to which men acquire an aversion after they have taken them in an emetic preparation. In this case we are conscious that the idea is altered from what it was when that wine was agreeable by the conjunction of the ideas of loathing and sickness of stomach. The like change of idea may be insensibly made by the change of our bodies as we advance in years, or when we are accustomed to any object which may occasion an indifference toward meats we were fond of in our childhood, and may make some objects cease to raise the disagreeable ideas which they excited upon our first use of them. Many of our simple perceptions are disagreeable only through the too great intenseness of the quality. Thus moderate light is agreeable, very strong light may be painful; moderate bitter may be pleasant, a higher degree may be offensive. A change in our organs will necessarily occasion a change in the intenseness of the perception at least and sometimes will even occasion a quite contrary perception. Thus a warm hand shall feel that water cold which a cold hand shall feel warm.

We shall not find it perhaps so easy to account for the diversity of fancy in more complex ideas of objects wherein we regard many ideas of different senses at once, as in some perceptions of those called primary qualities and some secondary, as explained by Mr. Locke – for instance, in the different fancies about architecture, gardening, dress. Of architecture and gardening, we shall offer something in Sect. VI; as to dress, we may generally account for the diversity of fancies

from a like conjunction of ideas. Thus, if, either from anything in nature or from the opinion of our country or acquaintance, the fancying of glaring colors be looked upon as evidence of levity or of any other evil quality of mind, or if any color or fashion be commonly used by rustics or by men of any disagreeable profession, employment, or temper, these additional ideas may recur constantly with that of the color or fashion and cause a constant dislike to them in those who join the additional ideas, even though the color or form is in no way disagreeable to themselves and actually does please others who ascribe no such ideas to them. But there seems to be no ground for believing such a diversity in human minds, that is, that the same simple idea or perception should give pleasure to one and pain to another, or to the same person at different times, though this is not to say that it seems a contradiction or that the same simple idea should do so.

8. The only pleasure of sense which our philosophers seem to consider is that which accompanies the simple ideas of sensation. But there are vastly greater pleasures in those complex ideas of objects which obtain the names of beautiful, regular, harmonious. Thus everyone acknowledges he is more delighted with a fine face or a just picture than with the view of any one color, were it as strong and lively as possible, and more pleased with a prospect of the sun arising among settled clouds and coloring their edges than with a starry hemisphere, a fine landscape, a regular building than with a clear blue sky, a smooth sea, or a large open plain, not diversified by woods, hills, waters, buildings, and yet even these latter appearances are not quite simple. So, in music, the pleasure of fine composition is incomparably greater than that of any one note, however sweet, full, or swelling.

9. Let it be observed that, in the following papers, the word beauty is taken for the idea raised in us and a sense of beauty for our power of receiving this idea. Harmony also denotes our pleasant ideas arising from composition of sounds, a good ear (as it is generally taken) being the power of perceiving this pleasure. In the following sections, an attempt is made to discover “what is the immediate occasion of these pleasant ideas, or what real quality in the objects ordinarily excites them.”

10. It is of no consequence whether we call these ideas of beauty and harmony perceptions of the external senses of seeing and hearing, or not. I should rather choose to call our power of perceiving these ideas an internal sense, were it only for the convenience of distinguishing them from other sensations of seeing and hearing which men may have without perception of beauty and harmony. It is plain from experience that many men have, in the common meaning, the senses of seeing and hearing perfect enough; they perceive all the simple ideas separately and have their pleasure. They distinguish them from each other, such as one color from another, either as quite different or as the stronger or fainter of the same color when they are placed beside each other, although they may often confound their names when they occur apart from each other, as some do the names of green and blue. They can tell, in separate notes, the higher, lower, sharper, or flatter when separately sounded. In figures, they discern the length, breadth, width of each line, surface, angle and may be as capable of hearing and seeing at great distances as any men whatsoever. And yet, perhaps, they shall find no pleasure in musical compositions, in painting, architecture, natural landscape or, perhaps, but a very weak one in comparison with what others enjoy from the same objects. This greater capacity of receiving such pleasant ideas we commonly call a fine genius or taste. In music we seem universally to acknowledge something like a distinct sense from the external one of hearing and call it a good ear. And we should probably acknowledge the like distinction in other objects, had we the distinct names to denote these powers of perception.

11. There will appear another reason, perhaps afterwards, for calling this power of perceiving the ideas of beauty an internal sense, for it is from this, that in some other affairs where our external senses are not much concerned, we discern a sort of beauty very like, in many respects, to that observed in sensible objects and accompanied with like pleasure. Such is that beauty perceived in theorems or universal truths, in general causes, and in some extensive principles of action.

12. Let everyone here consider how different we must suppose the perception to be with which

a poet is transported upon the prospect of any of those objects of natural beauty which ravish us even in his description, from that cold lifeless conception which we image in a dull critic, or one of the virtuosos, without what we call a fine taste. This latter class of men may have greater perfection in that knowledge which is derived from external sensation. They can tell all the specific differences of trees, herbs, minerals, metals; they know the form of every leaf, stalk, root, flower, and seed of all the species about which the poet is often very ignorant. And yet the poet shall have a vastly more delightful perception of the whole – and not only the poet, but any man of a fine taste. Our external senses may, by measuring, teach us all the proportions of architecture to the tenth of an inch and the situation of every muscle in the human body, and a good memory may retain these. And yet there is still something further necessary, not only to make a man a complete master in architecture, painting, or statuary, but even a tolerable judge in these works, or capable of receiving the highest pleasure in contemplating them. Since then there are such different powers of perception where what are commonly called the external senses are the same, since the most accurate knowledge of what the external senses discover often does not give the pleasure of beauty or harmony which yet one of a good taste will enjoy at once without much knowledge. We may justly use another name for these higher, and more delightful, perceptions of beauty and harmony and call the power of receiving such impressions an internal sense. The difference of the perceptions seems sufficient to vindicate the use of a different name, especially when we are told in what meaning the word is applied.

13. This superior power of perception is justly called a sense, because of its affinity to the other senses in that the pleasure neither arises from any knowledge of principles, proportions, causes, or of the usefulness of the object, but strikes us at first with the idea of beauty, nor does the most accurate knowledge increase this pleasure of beauty, however it may add a distinct rational pleasure from prospects of advantage, or from the increase of knowledge.

14. And, further, the ideas of beauty and harmony, like other sensible ideas, are necessarily

pleasant to us, as well as immediately so; neither can any resolution of our own, nor any prospect of advantage or disadvantage, vary the beauty or deformity of an object, for, as in the external sensations, no view of interest will make an object grateful, and no view of detriment, distinct from immediate pain in the perception, will make it disagreeable to the sense. So propose the whole world as a reward, or threaten the greatest evil, to make us approve a deformed object or disapprove a beautiful one; dissimulation may be procured by rewards or threatenings, or we may in external conduct abstain from any pursuit of the beautiful and pursue the deformed. But our sentiments of the forms and our perceptions would continue invariably the same.

15. Hence it plainly appears "that some objects are immediately the occasions of this pleasure of beauty, that we have senses fitted for perceiving it, and that it is distinct from that joy which arises from self-love upon prospect of advantage." Do not we often see convenience and use neglected to obtain beauty, without any other prospect of advantage in the beautiful form than the suggesting the pleasant ideas of beauty? Now this shows us that, however we may pursue beautiful objects from self-love, with a view to obtain the pleasures of beauty, as in architecture, gardening, and many other affairs, there must be a sense of beauty antecedent to prospects even of this advantage, without which sense these objects would not be thus advantageous or excite in us this pleasure which constitutes them advantageous. Our sense of beauty from objects by which they are constituted good to us is very distinct from our desire of them when they are thus constituted. Our desire of beauty may be counterbalanced by rewards or threats, but never our sense of it, even as fear of death, or love of life, may make us choose and desire a bitter portion, or neglect those meats which the sense of taste would recommend as pleasant. And yet no prospect of advantage, or fear of evil, can make that potion agreeable to the sense, or meat disagreeable to it, which was not so antecedently to this prospect. Just in the same manner as to the sense of beauty and harmony is it that the pursuit of such objects is frequently neglected, from prospects of advantage, aversion to labor, or any other motive of self-love, which does not prove that we have no sense of beauty, but only that our desire

of it may be counterbalanced by a stronger desire. So gold outweighing silver is never adduced as a proof that the latter is void of gravity.

16. Had we no such sense of beauty and harmony, houses, gardens, dress, equipage might have been recommended to us as convenient, fruitful, warm, easy, but never as beautiful. And in faces I see nothing which could please us but liveliness of color and smoothness of surface. And yet nothing is more certain than the fact that all these objects are recommended under quite different views on many occasions and that no custom, education, or example could ever give us perceptions distinct from those of the senses which we had the use of before, or recommend objects under another conception than our being grateful to have them. But the influence of custom, education, and example upon the sense of beauty shall be treated below.

17. Beauty is either original or comparative, or, if any like the terms better, absolute, or relative. Only let it be observed that by absolute or original beauty is not meant any quality supposed to be in the object which should of itself be beautiful without relation to any mind which perceives it, for beauty, like other names of sensible ideas, properly denotes the perception of some mind; so cold, hot, sweet, and bitter denote in our minds sensations to which perhaps there is no resemblance in the objects which excite these ideas in us, however we generally imagine that there is something in the object just like our perception. The ideas of beauty and harmony being excited upon our perception of some primary quality, and having relation to figure and time, may indeed have a nearer resemblance to objects than these sensations, which seem not so much any pictures of objects, as modifications of the perceiving mind. And yet were there no mind with a sense of beauty to contemplate objects, I see not how they could be called beautiful. We therefore by absolute beauty understand only that beauty, which we perceive in objects without comparison to anything external, of which the object is supposed an imitation or picture, such as that beauty perceived from the works of nature, artificial forms, figures, or theorems. Comparative or relative beauty is that which we perceive in objects commonly considered as imitations or resemblances of something else. These two kinds of beauty are the subject of the three following sections.

Sect. II Of Original or Absolute Beauty

1. Since it is certain that we have ideas of beauty and harmony, let us examine what quality in objects excites these ideas or is the occasion of them. And let it be here observed that our inquiry is only about the qualities which are beautiful to men, or about the foundation of their sense of beauty, for, as was above hinted, beauty has always relation to the sense of some mind, and when we afterwards show how generally the objects which occur to us are beautiful, we mean that such objects are agreeable to the sense of men. As there are not a few objects which seem no way beautiful to men, so we see a variety of other animals who seem delighted with them; they may have senses otherwise constituted than those of men and may have the ideas of beauty excited by objects of a quite different form. We see animals fitted for every place, and what to men appears rude and shapeless, or loathsome, may be to them a paradise.

2. That we may more distinctly discover the general foundation or occasion of the ideas of beauty among men, it will be necessary to consider it first in its simpler kinds, such as occurs to us in regular figures. And we may perhaps find that the same foundation extends to all the more complex species of it.

3. The figures which excite in us the ideas of beauty seem to be those in which there is uniformity amidst variety. There are many conceptions of objects which are agreeable upon other accounts, such as grandeur, novelty, sanctity, and some others, which shall be mentioned hereafter. But what we call beautiful in objects, to speak in the mathematical style, seems to be in a compound ratio of uniformity and variety. Thus where the uniformity of bodies is equal, the beauty is as the variety, and where the variety is equal, the beauty is as the uniformity. This will be plain from examples.

First, the variety increases the beauty in equal uniformity. The beauty of an equilateral triangle is less than that of the square, which is less than that of a pentagon, and this again is surpassed by the hexagon. When indeed the number of sides is much increased, the proportion of them to the radius or to the diameter of the figure, or of the circle to which regular polygons have an obvious relation, is so much lost to our observation that

the beauty does not always increase with the number of sides, and the want of parallelism in the sides of heptagons and other figures of odd numbers may also diminish their beauty. So, in solids, the eicosihedron surpasses the dodecahedron and thus the octahedron, which is still more beautiful than the cube, and this again surpasses the regular pyramid. The obvious ground of this is greater variety with equal uniformity.

The greater uniformity increases the beauty amidst equal variety in these instances: An equilateral triangle, or even an isosceles, surpasses the scalenum; a square surpasses the rhombus or lozenge, and this again the rhomboid, which is still more beautiful than the trapezium or any figure with irregular curved sides. So the regular solids vastly surpass all other solids of equal number of plain surfaces. And the same is observable not only in the five perfectly regular solids but in all those which have any considerable uniformity, such as cylinders, prisms, pyramids, and obelisks, which please every eye more than any rude figures, where there is no unity or resemblance among the parts.

Instances of the compound ratio we have in comparing circles or spheres with ellipses or spheroids and in comparing the compound solids, the exoctahedron, and eicosidodecahedron with the perfectly regular ones of which they are compounded are not very eccentric. And we shall find that the want of that most perfect uniformity observable in the latter is compensated by the greater variety in the others, so that the beauty is nearly equal.

4. These observations would probably hold true for the most part and might be confirmed by the judgment of children in the simpler figures, where the variety is not too great for their comprehension. And however uncertain some of the particular aforesaid instances may seem, it is perpetually to be observed that children are fond of all regular figures in their little diversions, even though they be no more convenient or useful to them than the figures of our common pebbles. We see how early they discover a taste or sense of beauty in desiring to see buildings, regular gardens, or even representations of them in pictures of any kind.

5. It is the same foundation which we have for our sense of beauty in the works of nature. In every part of the world which we call beautiful,

there is a vast uniformity amidst an almost infinite variety. Many parts of the universe seem not at all designed for the use of man; in fact, it is but a very small spot with which we have any acquaintance. The figures and motions of the great bodies are not obvious to our senses but are found out by reasoning and reflection upon many long observations. And yet as far as we can by sense discover or by reasoning enlarge our knowledge and extend our imagination, we generally find their structure, order, and motion agreeable to our sense of beauty. Every particular object in nature does not indeed appear beautiful to us, but there is a vast profusion of beauty over most of the objects which occur either to our senses or reasonings upon observation. That is, not to mention the apparent situation of the heavenly bodies in the circumference of a great sphere, which is wholly occasioned by the imperfection of our sight in discerning distances, the forms of all the great bodies in the universe are nearly spherical, the orbits of their revolutions generally elliptical and without great eccentricity, in those which continually occur to our observation. Now these are figures of great uniformity and therefore pleasing to us.

Further, to pass by the less obvious uniformity in the proportion of their quantities of matter, distances, and times of revolving to each other, what can exhibit a greater instance of uniformity amidst variety than the constant tenor of revolutions in nearly equal times of each planet around its axis and the central fire or sun through all the ages of which we have any records and in nearly the same orbit and, by which, after certain periods, all the same appearances are again renewed? The alternate successions of light and shade, or day and night, are constantly pursuing each other around each planet with an agreeable and regular diversity in the times they possess the several hemispheres in the summer, harvest, winter, and spring, and the various phases, aspects, and situations of the planets to each other, their conjunctions, and their oppositions in which they suddenly darken each other with their conic shades in eclipses are repeated to us at their fixed periods with invariable constancy. These are the beauties which charm the astronomer and make his tedious calculations pleasant.

6. Again, as to the dry part of the surface of our globe, a great part of which is covered with a

very pleasant inoffensive color, how beautifully is it diversified with various degrees of light and shade according to the different situations of the parts of its surface, in mountains, valleys, hills, and open plains which are variously inclined toward the great luminary!

7. If we descend to the more minute works of nature, what vast uniformity there is among all the species of plants and vegetables in the manner of their growth and propagation! What exact resemblance there is among all the plants of the same species whose numbers surpass our imagination! And this uniformity is not only observable in the form in gross; rather, in this it is not so very exact in all instances but in the structure of their minutest parts, which no eye unassisted with glasses can discern. In the almost infinite multitude of leaves, fruit, seed, or flowers of any one species, we often see an exact uniformity in the structure and situation of the smallest fibers. This is the beauty which charms an ingenious botanist. [. . .]

14. But in all these instances of beauty let it be observed that the pleasure is communicated to those who never reflected on this general foundation and that all here alleged is this, "That the pleasant sensation arises only from objects in which there is uniformity amidst variety." We may have the sensation without knowing what is the occasion of it, as a man's taste may suggest ideas of sweets, acids, and bitters, though he be ignorant of the forms of the small bodies or their motions which excite these perceptions in him.

Sect. III Of the Beauty of Theorems

1. The beauty of theorems, or universal truths demonstrated, deserves a distinct consideration, being of a nature pretty different from the former kinds of beauty, and yet there is none in which we shall see such an amazing variety with uniformity. Hence what arises is a very great pleasure distinct from prospects of any further advantage.

2. In one theorem, for example, we may find included, with the most exact agreement, not an infinite multitude of particular truths, but often an infinity of infinities, so that, although the necessity of forming abstract ideas and universal theorems arises perhaps from the limitation of

our minds which cannot admit an infinite multitude of singular ideas or judgments at once, this power gives us an evidence of the largeness of the human capacity above our imagination. Thus, for instance, the forty-seventh proposition of the first book of Euclid's *Elements* contains an infinite multitude of truths concerning the infinite possible sizes of right-angled triangles as you make the area greater or less, and in each of these sizes you may find an infinite multitude of dissimilar triangles as you vary the proportion of the base to the perpendicular, all which infinities of infinities agree in the general theorem. In algebraic and fluxional calculations, we shall still find a greater variety of particular truths included in general theorems, not only in general equations applicable to all kinds of quantity, but in more particular investigations of areas and tangents, in which one manner of operation shall discover theorems applicable to infinite orders or species of curves, to the infinite sizes of each species, and to the infinite points of the infinite individuals of each size.

3. That we may the better discern this agreement, or unity of an infinity of objects, in the general theorem to be the foundation of the beauty or pleasure attending their discovery, let us compare our satisfaction in such discoveries with the uneasy state of mind in which we are when we can only measure lines or surfaces by a scale or are making experiments which we can reduce to no general canon but only heaping up a multitude of particular incoherent observations. Now each of these trials discovers a new truth, but with no pleasure or beauty, notwithstanding the variety, till we can discover some sort of unity or reduce them to some general canon.

4. Again, let us take a metaphysical axiom such as this that every whole is greater than its part, and we shall find no beauty in the contemplation, for, though this proposition contains many infinities of particular truths, the unity is inconsiderable, since they all agree only in a vague undetermined conception of whole and part and in an indefinite excess of the former above the latter, which is sometimes great and sometimes small. So, should we hear that the cylinder is greater than the inscribed sphere, and this again greater than the cone of the same altitude and diameter with the base, we shall find no

pleasure in this knowledge of a general relation of greater and less without any precise difference or proportion. But, when we see the universal exact agreement of all possible sizes of such systems of solids that they preserve to each other the constant ratio of 3, 2, 1, how beautiful is the theorem, and how are we ravished with its first discovery!

We may likewise observe that easy or obvious propositions, even where the unity is sufficiently distinct and determinate, do not please us so much as those which being less obvious give us some surprise in the discovery. Thus we find little pleasure in discovering that a line bisecting the vertical angle of an isosceles triangle bisects the base, or the reverse, or, that equilateral triangles are equiangular. These truths we almost know intuitively without demonstration. They are like common goods or those which men have long possessed which do not give such sensible joys as much smaller new additions may give us. But let none hence imagine that the sole pleasure of theorems is from surprise, for the same novelty of a single experiment does not please us much. And we ought not to conclude from the greater pleasure accompanying a new or unexpected advantage that surprise or novelty is the only pleasure of life, or the only ground of delight in truth.

5. There is another beauty in propositions which cannot be omitted, namely, when one theorem contains a vast multitude of corollaries easily deducible from it. Thus that theorem which gives us the equation of a curve, whence perhaps most of its properties may be deduced, does in some way please and satisfy our mind above any other proposition. Such a theorem also is the thirty-fifth of the first book of Euclid, from which the whole art of measuring right-lined areas is deduced by resolution into triangles which are the halves of so many parallelograms, and these are each respectively equal to so many rectangles of the base into the perpendicular altitude. The forty-seventh, of the first book is another of like beauty, and so are many others.

In the search of nature there is like beauty in the knowledge of some great principles or universal forces from which innumerable effects do flow. Such is gravitation in Sir Isaac Newton's scheme; such also is the knowledge of the original of rights, perfect and imperfect and external,

alienable and unalienable, with their manner of translations, from whence the greatest part of moral duties may be deduced in the various relations of human life. [. . .]

8. As to the works of art, were we to run through the various artificial contrivances or structures, we should constantly find the foundation of the beauty which appears in them to be some kind of uniformity or unity of proportion among the parts, and of each part to the whole. As there is a vast diversity of proportions possible, and different kinds of uniformity, so there is room enough for that diversity of fancies observable in architecture, gardening, and such like arts in different nations. They all may have uniformity, though the parts in one may differ from those in another. The Chinese or Persian buildings are not like the Grecian and Roman, and yet the former has its uniformity of the various parts to each other and to the whole, as well as the latter.

Sect. IV Of Relative or Comparative Beauty

1. If the preceding thoughts concerning the foundation of absolute beauty be just, we may easily understand wherein relative beauty consists. All beauty is relative to the sense of some mind perceiving it, but what we call relative is that which is apprehended in any object commonly considered as an imitation of some original. And this beauty is founded on a conformity or a kind of unity between the original and the copy. The original may be either some object in nature or some established idea, for, if there be any known ideas as a standard and rules to fix this image or idea by, we may make a beautiful imitation. Thus a sculptor, painter, or poet may please us with a Hercules, if his piece retains that grandeur and those marks of strength and courage which we imagine in that hero.

And farther, to obtain comparative beauty alone, it is not necessary that there be any beauty in the original. The imitation of absolute beauty may indeed in the whole make a more lovely piece, so that an exact imitation shall still be beautiful, though the original were entirely void of it. Thus the deformities of old age, or the rudest rocks or mountains in a landscape, in a

picture, if well represented, shall have abundant beauty, though perhaps not so great as if the original were absolutely beautiful and as well represented.

2. The same observation holds true in the descriptions of the poets either of natural objects or persons, and this relative beauty is what they should principally endeavor to obtain as the peculiar beauty of their works. By the *Moratae Fabulae* we are not to understand virtuous manners in a moral sense, but a just representation of manners or characters as they are in nature, and the fact that the actions and sentiments must be suited to the characters of the persons to whom they are ascribed in epic and dramatic poetry. Perhaps very good reasons may be suggested from the nature of our passions to prove that a poet should not draw his characters perfectly virtuous; these characters indeed abstractly considered might give more pleasure and have more beauty than the imperfect ones which occur in life with a mixture of good and evil. But it may suffice at present to suggest against this choice in that we have more lively ideas of imperfect men with all their passions than we do of morally perfect heroes, such as those that really never occur to our observation and of which consequently we cannot judge exactly as to their agreement with the copy. And, further, through consciousness of our own state, we are more nearly touched and affected by the imperfect characters, since in them we see represented in the persons of others the contrasts of inclinations and the struggles between the passions of self-love and those of honor and virtue which we often feel in our own breasts. This is the perfection of beauty for which Homer is justly admired, as well as for the variety of his characters.

3. Many other beauties of poetry may be reduced under this class of relative beauty. The probability is absolutely necessary to make us imagine resemblance, since it is by resemblance that the similitudes, metaphors, and allegories are made beautiful, whether the subject or the thing compared to it have beauty or not; the beauty indeed is greater when both have some original beauty or dignity as well as resemblance. And this is the foundation of the rule of studying decency in metaphors and similes as well as likeness. The measures and cadence are instances of harmony and come under the heading of absolute beauty.

4. We may here observe a strange proneness in our minds to make perpetual comparisons of all things which occur to our observation, even those which would seem very remote. There are certain resemblances in the motions of all animals upon like passions which easily found a comparison, but this does not serve to entertain our fancy. Inanimate objects often have positions that resemble those of the human body in various circumstances, and these airs or gestures of the body are indications of certain dispositions in the mind, so that our very passions and affections as well as other circumstances obtain a resemblance to natural inanimate objects. Thus a tempest at sea is often an emblem of wrath; a plant or tree drooping under the rain is an emblem of a person in sorrow; a poppy bending its stalk, or a flower withering when cut by the plow, resembles the death of a blooming hero; an aged oak in the mountains shall represent an old empire; a flame seizing a wood shall represent a war. In short, everything in nature, by our strange inclination to resemblance, shall be brought to represent other things, even the most remote, especially the passions and circumstances of human nature in which we are more nearly concerned. And to confirm this, and furnish instances of it, one need only look into Homer or Virgil. A fruitful fancy would find in a grove, or a wood, an emblem for every character in a commonwealth and every turn of temper or station in life. [...]

Sect. VI Of the Universality of the Sense of Beauty among Men

1. We insinuated before “that all beauty has a relation to some perceiving power,” and consequently that, since we know not how great a variety of senses there may be among animals, there is no form in nature concerning which we can pronounce “that it has no beauty,” for it may still please some perceiving power. But our inquiry is confined to men, and before we examine the universality of this sense of beauty, or their agreement in approving uniformity, it may be proper to consider “whether, as the other senses which give us pleasure do also give us pain, so this sense of beauty does make some objects disagreeable to us, and the occasion of pain.”

That many objects give no pleasure to our sense is obvious – many are certainly void of beauty. But then there is no form which seems necessarily disagreeable of itself when we dread no other evil from it and compare it with nothing better of the kind. Many objects are naturally displeasing and distasteful to our external senses just as others are pleasing and agreeable, as smells, tastes, and some separate sounds. But, as to our sense of beauty, no composition of objects which give not unpleasant simple ideas seems positively unpleasant or painful of itself had we never observed anything better of the kind. Deformity is only the absence of beauty, or deficiency in the beauty expected in any species. Thus bad music pleases rustics who never heard any better, and the finest ear is not offended by the tuning of instruments if it is not too tedious and when no harmony is expected, whereas a much smaller dissonance shall offend amidst the performance when harmony is expected. A rude heap of stones is no way offensive to one who shall be displeased with irregularity in architecture when beauty was expected. And had there been a species of that form which we call now ugly or deformed, and had we never seen or expected greater beauty, we should have received no disgust from it, even though the pleasure would not have been so great in this form as in those we now admire. Our sense of beauty seems designed to give us positive pleasure but not positive pain or disgust that is any greater than what arises from disappointment.

2. There are indeed many faces which at first view are apt to raise dislike, but this is generally not from any positive deformity which of itself is positively displeasing; rather, it is from want of expected beauty or much more from some natural indications of morally bad dispositions which we all acquire a faculty of discerning in countenances, airs, and gestures. That this is not occasioned by any form positively disgusting will appear from this if, upon long acquaintance, we are sure of finding sweetness of temper, humanity, and cheerfulness, and, even though the bodily form continues, it shall give us no disgust or displeasure, whereas, if anything was naturally disagreeable, or the occasion of pain, or positive distaste, it would always continue so, **even though the aversion we might have toward** it were counterbalanced by other considerations. There are horrors raised by some objects which

are only the effect of fear for ourselves or compassion toward others, when either reason or some foolish association of ideas makes us apprehend danger and not the effect of anything in the form of itself, for we find that most of those objects which excite horror at first, such as ravenous beasts, a tempestuous sea, a craggy precipice, a dark shady valley, may become the occasions of pleasure when experience or reason has removed the fear.

3. We shall see hereafter “that associations of ideas make objects pleasant, and delightful, which are not naturally apt to give any such pleasures, and that, in the same way, the casual conjunctions of ideas may give a disgust where there is nothing disagreeable in the form itself.” And this is the occasion of many fantastic aversions to figures of some animals and to some other forms. Thus swine, serpents of all kinds, and some insects really beautiful enough are beheld with aversion by many people who have got some accidental ideas associated to them. And, for distastes of this kind, no other account can be given.

4. But, as to the universal agreement of mankind in their sense of beauty from uniformity amidst variety, we must consult experience. And, as we allow all men reason, since all men are capable of understanding simple arguments, though few are capable of complex demonstrations, so in this case it must be sufficient to prove this sense of beauty universal, “if all men are better pleased with uniformity in the simpler instances than the contrary, even when there is no advantage observed attending it and, likewise, if all men, according as their capacity enlarges, so as to receive and compare more complex ideas, have a greater delight in uniformity and are pleased with its more complex kinds, both original and relative.”

Now let us consider if ever any person was void of this sense in the simpler instances. Few trials have been made in the simplest instances of harmony, because as soon as we find an ear incapable of relishing complex compositions, such as our tunes are, no further pains are employed about such. But, in figures, did ever any man make choice of a trapezium or any irregular curve for the ichnography or plan of his house without necessity or some great motive of convenience, or to make the opposite walls not parallel or unequal in height? Were ever trapeziums, irregular poly-

gons, or curves chosen for the forms of doors or windows, though these figures might have answered the uses as well and would have often saved a great part of the time, labor, and expense to workmen which is now employed in suiting the stones and timber to the regular forms? Among all the fantastic modes of dress, none was ever quite void of uniformity, if it were only the resemblance of two sides of the same robe and in some general aptitude to the human form. The representational painting had always relative beauty by its resemblance to other objects, and often those objects were originally beautiful. But never were any so extravagant as to affect such figures as are made by the casual spilling of liquid colors. Who was ever pleased with an inequality of heights in windows of the same range or dissimilar shapes of them, with unequal legs or arms, eyes or cheeks in a mistress? It must however be acknowledged “That interest may often counterbalance our sense of beauty in this affair as well as in others, and superior good qualities may make us overlook such imperfections.”

5. Further, it may perhaps appear “That regularity and uniformity are so copiously diffused through the universe, and we are so readily determined to pursue this as the foundation of beauty in works of art, that there is scarcely anything ever fancied as beautiful where there is not really something of this uniformity and regularity.” We are indeed often mistaken in imagining that there is the greatest possible beauty, where it is but very imperfect, but still it is some degree of beauty which pleases, even though there may be higher degrees which we do not observe, and our sense acts with full regularity when we are pleased, even though we are kept by a false prejudice from pursuing objects which would please us more.

A Goth, for instance, is mistaken, when from education he imagines the architecture of his country to be the most perfect. And a conjunction of some hostile ideas may make him adverse to Roman buildings and study to demolish them, as some of our reformers did papal buildings, not being able to separate the ideas of the superstitious worship from the forms of the buildings where it was practiced. And yet it is still real beauty which pleases the Goth, founded upon uniformity amidst variety. For the Gothic pillars are uniform to each other, not only in their

sections, which are lozenge formed, but also in their heights and ornaments. Their arches are not one uniform curve, yet they are segments of similar curves and generally equal in the same ranges. Indian buildings have some kind of uniformity, and many of the Eastern nations, though they differ much from us, have great regularity in their manner as did the Romans in theirs. Our Indian screens, which wonderfully supply the regular imaginations of our ladies with ideas of deformity in which nature is very churlish and sparing, do indeed lack all the beauty arising from proportion of parts and conformity to nature; yet they cannot divest themselves of all beauty and uniformity in the separate parts. And this diversification of the human body into various contortions may give some wild pleasure from variety, since some uniformity to the human shape is still retained.

6. There is one sort of beauty which might perhaps have been better mentioned before but will not be impertinent here, because the taste or relish of it is universal in all nations and with the young as well as the old, and that is the beauty of history. Everyone knows how dull a study it is to read over a collection of newspapers which shall perhaps relate all the same events with history: The superior pleasure then of history must arise, like that of poetry, from manners just as when we see a character well drawn wherein we find the secret causes of a great diversity of seemingly inconsistent actions, or an interest of state laid open, or an artful view nicely unfolded, the execution of which influences very different and opposite actions as the circumstances may alter. Now this reduces the whole to a unity of design at least. And this may be observed in the very fables which entertain children; otherwise, we cannot make them relish them.

7. What has been said will probably be assented to, if we always remember in our inquiries into the universality of the sense of beauty, "That there may be real beauty where there is not the greatest, and that there are an infinity of different forms which may all have some unity and yet differ from each other," so that men may have different fancies of beauty, but uniformity will be the universal foundation of our approbation of any form whatsoever as beautiful. And we shall find that it is so in the architecture, gardening, dress, equipage, and furniture of houses, even

among the most uncultivated nations, where uniformity still pleases, without any other advantage than the pleasure of the contemplation of it.

8. On this subject, we should consider how, in like cases, we form very different judgments concerning the internal and external senses. Nothing is more ordinary among those who, after Mr. Locke, have shaken off the groundless opinions about innate ideas then allege "That all our relish for beauty and order is either from prospect of advantage, custom, or education," for no other reason but for the variety of fancies in the world. And from this they conclude "That our fancies do not arise from any natural power of perception or sense." Yet all allow that our external senses are natural and that the pleasures or pains of their sensations, however they may be increased or diminished by custom or education and counterbalanced by interest, really precede custom, habit, education, or prospect of interest. Now it is certain "That there is at least as great a variety of fancies about their objects, as the objects of beauty." But, in fact, it is much more difficult, and perhaps impossible, to bring the fancies or relishes of the external senses to any general foundation at all, or to find any rule for the agreeable or disagreeable, though we all allow "that these are natural powers of perception."

9. The reason for this different judgment can be no other than our having distinct names for the external senses and none, or very few, for the internal and, by this are led, as in many other cases, to look upon the former as more fixed, real, and natural than the latter. The sense of harmony has got its name, a good ear, and we are generally brought to acknowledge that this is a natural power of perception or a sense in some way distinct from hearing. Now it is certain "That there is, as necessary, a perception of beauty upon the presence of regular objects, just as there is of harmony upon hearing certain sounds."

10. But let it be observed here once and for all "That an internal sense no more presupposes an innate idea, or principle of knowledge, than the external." Both are natural powers of perception or determinations of the mind to receive necessarily certain ideas from the presence of objects. The internal sense is a passive power of receiving ideas of beauty from all objects in which there is uniformity amidst variety. And there seems to be nothing more difficult in this matter

than that the mind should be always determined to receive the idea of sweet when particles of such a form enter the pores of the tongue, or to have the idea of sound upon any quick undulation of the air. The one seems to have as little connection with its idea as the other. And the same power could with equal ease constitute the former's occasion of ideas as the latter.

11. The association of ideas hinted at above is one great cause of the apparent diversity of fancies in the sense of beauty as well as in the external senses, and it often makes men have an aversion to objects of beauty and a liking to others lacking it but under different conceptions than those of beauty or deformity. And here it may not be improper to give some instances of some of these associations. The beauty of trees, their cool shades, and their aptness to conceal from observation have made groves and woods the usual retreat to those who love solitude, especially to the religious, the pensive, the melancholy, and the amorous. And do not we find that we have so joined the ideas of these dispositions of mind with those external objects that they always recur to us along with them? The cunning of the heathen priests might make such obscure places the scene of the fictitious appearances of their deities, and hence we ascribe ideas of something divine to them. We know the like effect in the ideas of our churches from the perpetual use of them only in religious exercises. The faint light in Gothic buildings has had the same association of a very foreign idea, which our poet shows in his epithet,

A dim religious light.

In like manner it is known that often all the circumstances of actions, or places, or dresses of persons, or voice or song, which have occurred at any time together when we were strongly affected by any passion will be so connected that any one of these will make all the rest recur. And this is often the occasion both of great pleasure and pain, delight and aversion to many objects, which of themselves might have been perfectly indifferent to us. But these approbations, or distastes, are remote from the ideas of beauty, being plainly different ideas.

12. There is also another charm to various persons in music, which is distinct from the

harmony and is occasioned by its raising of agreeable passions. The human voice is obviously varied by all the stronger passions. And, when our ear discerns any resemblance between the air of a tune, whether sung or played upon an instrument, in its time, or modulation, or any other circumstance, and the sound of the human voice in any passion, we shall be touched by it in a very sensible manner and have melancholy, joy, gravity, or thoughtfulness excited in us by a sort of sympathy or contagion. The same connection is observable between the very air of a tune and the words expressing any passion which we have heard it fitted to, so that they shall both recur to us together, though but one of them affects our senses.

Now in such a diversity of pleasing or displeasing ideas which may be joined with forms of bodies, or tunes, when men are of such different dispositions and prone to such a variety of passions, it is no wonder "that they should often disagree in their fancies of objects, even though their sense of beauty and harmony were perfectly uniform," because many other ideas may either please or displease, according to persons' tempers and past circumstances. We know how agreeable a very wild country may be to any person who has spent the cheerful days of his youth in it, and how disagreeable very beautiful places may be if they were the scenes of his misery. And this may help us in many cases to account for the diversities of fancy without denying the uniformity of our internal sense of beauty.

13. Grandeur and novelty are two ideas that differ from beauty but that often recommend objects to us. The reason for this is foreign to the present subject.

Sect. VII Of the Power of Custom, Education, and Example as to Our Internal Senses

1. Custom, education, and example are so often alleged in this affair as the occasion of our relish for beautiful objects, and for our approbation of, or delight in, a certain conduct in life, in a moral sense, that it is necessary to examine these three particularly to make it appear "that there is a natural power of perception or sense of beauty in objects that precedes all custom, education, or example."

2. Custom, as distinct from the other two, operates in this manner. As to actions, it only enables the mind or body more easily to perform those actions which have been frequently repeated. It neither leads us to apprehend them under any other view than those under which we were capable of apprehending them at first, nor does it give us any new power of perception about them. We are naturally capable of sentiments of fear and dread of any powerful presence, and so custom may connect the ideas of religious horror to certain buildings. But custom could never have made a being naturally incapable of fear receive such ideas. So, had we no other power of perceiving or forming ideas of actions but as they were advantageous or disadvantageous, custom could only have made us more ready at perceiving the advantage or disadvantage of actions. But this is not to our present purpose.

As to our approbation of, or delight in, external objects, when the blood or spirits of which anatomists talk are roused, quickened, or fermented as they call it, in any agreeable manner by medicine or nutriment, or any glands frequently stimulated to secretion, it is certain that, to preserve the body's ease, we shall delight in objects of taste which in and of themselves are not immediately pleasant to it if they promote that agreeable state to which the body had been accustomed. Further, custom will so alter the state of the body that what at first raised uneasy sensations will cease to do so, or perhaps raise another agreeable idea of the same sense. But custom can never give us any idea of a sense different from those we had prior to it; it will never make those who have no sight approve objects as colored, or those who have no taste approve meats as delicious, however they might approve them as strengthening or exhilarating. When our glands and the parts about them were void of feeling, did we perceive no pleasure from certain brisker motions in the blood? Custom could never make stimulating or intoxicating fluids or medicines agreeable when they were not so to the taste. So, by like reasoning, had we no natural sense of beauty from uniformity, custom could never have made us imagine any beauty in objects; that is, if we had had no ear, custom could never have given us the pleasures of harmony. When we have these natural senses antecedently, custom may make us capable of extending our views

further and of receiving more complex ideas of beauty in bodies, or harmony in sounds, by increasing our attention and quickness of perception. But however custom may increase our power of receiving or comparing complex ideas, it seems rather to weaken than to strengthen the ideas of beauty or the impressions of pleasure from regular objects; otherwise, how is it possible that any person could go into the open air on a sunny day, or clear evening, without the most extravagant raptures such as those Milton ascribes to our ancestor after his first creation? For such raptures any person should certainly fall into, when first viewing that kind of scene.

Custom in like manner may make it easier for any person to discern the use of a complex machine and approve it as advantageous, but he would never have imagined it beautiful had he no natural sense of beauty. Custom may make us quicker in apprehending the truth of complex theorems, but, although we all find the pleasure or beauty of theorems as strong at first as ever, custom makes us more capable of retaining and comparing complex ideas so as to discern more complicated uniformity which escapes the observation of novices in any art. However, all this presupposes a natural sense of beauty in uniformity, for, had there been nothing in forms which was constituted as the necessary occasion of pleasure to our senses, no repetition of indifferent ideas as to pleasure or pain, beauty or deformity, could ever have made them grow pleasing or displeasing.

3. The effect of education is this: that thereby we receive many speculative opinions, which are sometimes true and sometimes false, and are often led to believe that objects may be naturally apt to give pleasure or pain to our external senses, but which in reality have no such qualities. And further, by education, there are some strong associations of ideas without any reason, by mere accident sometimes, as well as by design, which it is very hard for us ever after to break asunder. Thus aversions are raised to darkness, and to many kinds of meat, and to certain innocent actions. Approbations without ground are raised in like manner. But in all these instances education never makes us apprehend any qualities in objects for which we do not naturally have senses capable of perceiving. We know what sickness of the stomach is and may without ground believe

that very healthful meats will raise this, and, by our sight and smell, we receive disagreeable ideas of the food of swine, and their sties, and perhaps cannot prevent the recurrence of these ideas at table. But never were men naturally blindly prejudiced against objects, as of a disagreeable color, or in favor of others, as of a beautiful color; they perhaps hear men disparage one color and may imagine this color to be some quite different sensible quality of the other senses, but that is all. And, in the same way, a man naturally void of taste could by no education receive the ideas of taste or be prejudiced in favor of meats as delicious. So, had we no natural sense of beauty and harmony, we could never be prejudiced in favor of objects or sounds as being beautiful or harmonious. Education may make an unattentive Goth imagine that his countrymen have attained the perfection of architecture and an aversion to his enemies, the Romans, may have created some disagreeable ideas about Roman buildings, even causing them to be demolished, but he would never have formed these prejudices had he been

void of a sense of beauty. Did blind men debate ever whether purple or scarlet were the finer color? Or could any education prejudice them in favor of either as colors?

Thus education and custom may influence our internal senses, where they already exist, by enlarging the capacity of our minds to retain and compare the parts of complex compositions, and then, if the finest objects are presented to us, we grow conscious of a pleasure far superior to what common performances excite. But all this presupposes that our sense of beauty is natural. Instruction in anatomy and observation of nature and those airs of the countenance and attitudes of body which accompany any sentiment, action, or passion may enable us to know where there is a just imitation. But why should an exact imitation please upon observation, if we did not naturally have a sense of beauty in it, any more than observing the situation of fifty or a hundred pebbles thrown at random? And, should we observe them ever so often, we should never dream of their growing beautiful.

Of the Standard of Taste

David Hume

The Scotsman David Hume (1711–76)
was an essayist, historian, and one of the
most influential of all philosophers.

The great variety of Taste, as well as of opinion, which prevails in the world, is too obvious not to have fallen under every one's observation. Men of the most confined knowledge are able to remark a difference of taste in the narrow circle of their acquaintance, even where the persons have been educated under the same government, and have early imbibed the same prejudices. But those, who can enlarge their view to contemplate distant nations and remote ages, are still more surprized at the great inconsistency and contrariety. We are apt to call *barbarous* whatever departs widely from our own taste and apprehension: But soon find the epithet of reproach retorted on us. And the highest arrogance and self-conceit is at last startled, on observing an equal assurance on all sides, and scruples, amidst such a contest of sentiment, to pronounce positively in its own favour.

As this variety of taste is obvious to the most careless enquirer; so will it be found, on examination, to be still greater in reality than in appearance. The sentiments of men often differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all kinds, even while their general discourse is the same. There are certain terms in every language, which import blame, and others praise; and all men, who use the same tongue, must agree in their application

of them. Every voice is united in applauding elegance, propriety, simplicity, spirit in writing; and in blaming fustian, affectation, coldness, and a false brilliancy: But when critics come to particulars, this seeming unanimity vanishes; and it is found, that they had affixed a very different meaning to their expressions. In all matters of opinion and science, the case is opposite: The difference among men is there oftener found to lie in generals than in particulars; and to be less in reality than in appearance. An explanation of the terms commonly ends the controversy; and the disputants are surprized to find, that they had been quarrelling, while at bottom they agreed in their judgment.

Those who found morality on sentiment, more than on reason, are inclined to comprehend ethics under the former observation, and to maintain, that, in all questions, which regard conduct and manners, the difference among men is really greater than at first sight it appears. It is indeed obvious, that writers of all nations and all ages concur in applauding justice, humanity, magnanimity, prudence, veracity; and in blaming the opposite qualities. Even poets and other authors, whose compositions are chiefly calculated to please the imagination, are yet found, from Homer down to Fenelon, to inculcate the same moral precepts, and to bestow their applause and blame on the same virtues and vices. This great unanimity is usually ascribed to the influence of

plain reason; which, in all these cases, maintains similar sentiments in all men, and prevents those controversies, to which the abstract sciences are so much exposed. So far as the unanimity is real, this account may be admitted as satisfactory: But we must also allow that some part of the seeming harmony in morals may be accounted for from the very nature of language. The word *virtue*, with its equivalent in every tongue, implies praise; as that of *vice* does blame: And no one, without the most obvious and grossest impropriety, could affix reproach to a term, which in general acceptance is understood in a good sense; or bestow applause, where the idiom requires disapprobation. Homer's general precepts, where he delivers any such, will never be controverted; but it is obvious, that, when he draws particular pictures of manners, and represents heroism in Achilles and prudence in Ulysses, he intermixes a much greater degree of ferocity in the former, and of cunning and fraud in the latter, than Fenelon would admit of. The sage Ulysses in the Greek poet seems to delight in lies and fictions, and often employs them without any necessity or even advantage: But his more scrupulous son, in the French epic writer, exposes himself to the most imminent perils, rather than depart from the most exact line of truth and veracity.

The admirers and followers of the Alcoran insist on the excellent moral precepts interspersed throughout that wild and absurd performance. But it is to be supposed, that the Arabic words, which correspond to the English, equity, justice, temperance, meekness, charity, were such as, from the constant use of that tongue, must always be taken in a good sense; and it would have argued the greatest ignorance, not of morals, but of language, to have mentioned them with any epithets, besides those of applause and approbation. But would we know, whether the pretended prophet had really attained a just sentiment of morals? Let us attend to his narration; and we shall soon find, that he bestows praise on such instances of treachery, inhumanity, cruelty, revenge, bigotry, as are utterly incompatible with civilized society. No steady rule of right seems there to be attended to; and every action is blamed or praised, so far only as it is beneficial or hurtful to the true believers.

The merit of delivering true general precepts in ethics is indeed very small. Whoever recom-

mends any moral virtues, really does no more than is implied in the terms themselves. That people, who invented the word *charity*, and used it in a good sense, inculcated more clearly and much more efficaciously, the precept, *be charitable*, than any pretended legislator or prophet, who should insert such a *maxim* in his writings. Of all expressions, those, which, together with their other meaning, imply a degree either of blame or approbation, are the least liable to be perverted or mistaken.

It is natural for us to seek a *Standard of Taste*; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another.

There is a species of philosophy, which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste. The difference, it is said, is very wide between judgment and sentiment. All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. But all determinations of the understanding are not right; because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact; and are not always conformable to that standard. Among a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true; and the only difficulty is to fix and ascertain it. On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others. To seek the real beauty, or real deformity, is as fruitless an enquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter. According to the disposition of the organs, the same object may be both sweet and bitter; and the proverb has justly determined it to be fruitless

to dispute concerning tastes. It is very natural, and even quite necessary, to extend this axiom to mental, as well as bodily taste; and thus common sense, which is so often at variance with philosophy, especially with the sceptical kind, is found, in one instance at least, to agree in pronouncing the same decision.

But though this axiom, by passing into a proverb, seems to have attained the sanction of common sense; there is certainly a species of common sense which opposes it, at least serves to modify and restrain it. Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton, or Bunyan and Addison, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as Teneriffe, or a pond as extensive as the ocean. Though there may be found persons, who give the preference to the former authors; no one pays attention to such a taste; and we pronounce without scruple the sentiment of these pretended critics to be absurd and ridiculous. The principle of the natural equality of tastes is then totally forgot, and while we admit it on some occasions, where the objects seem near an equality, it appears an extravagant paradox, or rather a palpable absurdity, where objects so disproportioned are compared together.

It is evident that none of the rules of composition are fixed by reasonings *a priori*, or can be esteemed abstract conclusions of the understanding, from comparing those habitudes and relations of ideas, which are eternal and immutable. Their foundation is the same with that of all the practical sciences, experience; nor are they any thing but general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages. Many of the beauties of poetry and even of eloquence are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles, metaphors, and an abuse or perversion of terms from their natural meaning. To check the sallies of the imagination, and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness, would be the most contrary to the laws of criticism; because it would produce a work, which, by universal experience, has been found the most insipid and disagreeable. But though poetry can never submit to exact truth, it must be confined by rules of art, discovered to the author either by genius or observation. If some negligent or irregular writers have

pleased, they have not pleased by their transgressions of rule or order, but in spite of these transgressions: They have possessed other beauties, which were conformable to just criticism; and the force of these beauties has been able to overpower censure, and give the mind a satisfaction superior to the disgust arising from the blemishes. Ariosto pleases; but not by his monstrous and improbable fictions, by his bizarre mixture of the serious and comic styles, by the want of coherence in his stories, or by the continual interruptions of his narration. He charms by the force and clearness of his expression, by the readiness and variety of his inventions, and by his natural pictures of the passions, especially those of the gay and amorous kind: And however his faults may diminish our satisfaction, they are not able entirely to destroy it. Did our pleasure really arise from those parts of his poem, which we denominate faults, this would be no objection to criticism in general: It would only be an objection to those particular rules of criticism, which would establish such circumstances to be faults, and would represent them as universally blameable. If they are found to please, they cannot be faults; let the pleasure, which they produce, be ever so unexpected and unaccountable.

But though all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature, we must not imagine, that, on every occasion, the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules. Those finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature, and require the concurrence of many favourable circumstances to make them play with facility and exactness, according to their general and established principles. The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine. When we would make an experiment of this nature, and would try the force of any beauty or deformity, we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, our experiment will be fallacious, and we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty. The relation, which nature has placed between the form and the

sentiment, will at least be more obscure; and it will require greater accuracy to trace and discern it. We shall be able to ascertain its influence not so much from the operation of each particular beauty, as from the durable admiration, which attends those works, that have survived all the caprices of mode and fashion, all the mistakes of ignorance and envy.

The same Homer, who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and at London. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory. Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator; but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real genius, the longer his works endure, and the more wide they are spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with. Envy and jealousy have too much place in a narrow circle; and even familiar acquaintance with his person may diminish the applause due to his performances: But when these obstructions are removed, the beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments, immediately display their energy; and while the world endures, they maintain their authority over the minds of men.

It appears then, that, amidst all the variety and caprice of taste, there are certain general principles of approbation or blame, whose influence a careful eye may trace in all operations of the mind. Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease; and if they fail of their effect in any particular instance, it is from some apparent defect or imperfection in the organ. A man in a fever would not insist on his palate as able to decide concerning flavours; nor would one, affected with the jaundice, pretend to give a verdict with regard to colours. In each creature, there is a sound and a defective state; and the former alone can be supposed to afford us a true standard of taste and sentiment. If, in the sound state of the organ, there be an entire or a considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in day-light, to the eye of a man in

health, is denominated their true and real colour, even while colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses.

Many and frequent are the defects in the internal organs, which prevent or weaken the influence of those general principles, on which depends our sentiment of beauty or deformity. Though some objects, by the structure of the mind, be naturally calculated to give pleasure, it is not to be expected, that in every individual the pleasure will be equally felt. Particular incidents and situations occur, which either throw a false light on the objects, or hinder the true from conveying to the imagination the proper sentiment and perception.

One obvious cause, why many feel not the proper sentiment of beauty, is the want of that *delicacy* of imagination, which is requisite to convey a sensibility of those finer emotions. This delicacy every one pretends to: Every one talks of it; and would reduce every kind of taste or sentiment to its standard. But as our intention in this essay is to mingle some light of the understanding with the feelings of sentiment, it will be proper to give a more accurate definition of delicacy, than has hitherto been attempted. And not to draw our philosophy from too profound a source, we shall have recourse to a noted story in Don Quixote.

It is with good reason, says Sancho to the squire with the great nose, that I pretend to have a judgment in wine: This is a quality hereditary in our family. Two of my kinsmen were once called to give their opinion of a hogshead, which was supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage. One of them tastes it; considers it; and after mature reflection pronounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather, which he perceived in it. The other, after using the same precautions, gives also his verdict in favour of the wine; but with the reserve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish. You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their judgment. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom, an old key with a leathern thong tied to it.

The great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will easily teach us to apply this story. Though it be certain, that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in

objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external; it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings. Now as these qualities may be found in a small degree, or may be mixed and confounded with each other, it often happens, that the taste is not affected with such minute qualities, or is not able to distinguish all the particular flavours, amidst the disorder, in which they are presented. Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the literal or metaphorical sense. Here then the general rules of beauty are of use; being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases, when presented singly and in a high degree: And if the same qualities, in a continued composition and in a smaller degree, affect not the organs with a sensible delight or uneasiness, we exclude the person from all pretensions to this delicacy. To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition is like finding the key with the leathern thong; which justified the verdict of Sancho's kinsmen, and confounded those pretended judges who had condemned them. Though the hog's-head had never been emptied, the taste of the one was still equally delicate, and that of the other equally dull and languid: But it would have been more difficult to have proved the superiority of the former, to the conviction of every by-stander. In like manner, though the beauties of writing had never been methodized, or reduced to general principles; though no excellent models had ever been acknowledged; the different degrees of taste would still have subsisted, and the judgment of one man been preferable to that of another; but it would not have been so easy to silence the bad critic, who might always insist upon his particular sentiment, and refuse to submit to his antagonist. But when we show him an avowed principle of art; when we illustrate this principle by examples, whose operation, from his own particular taste, he acknowledges to be conformable to the principle; when we prove, that the same principle may be applied to the present case, where he did not perceive or feel its influence: He must conclude, upon the whole, that the fault lies in himself, and that he wants the delicacy, which is

requisite to make him sensible of every beauty and every blemish, in any composition or discourse.

It is acknowledged to be the perfection of every sense or faculty, to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation. The smaller the objects are, which become sensible to the eye, the finer is that organ, and the more elaborate its make and composition. A good palate is not tried by strong flavours; but by a mixture of small ingredients, where we are still sensible of each part, notwithstanding its minuteness and its confusion with the rest. In like manner, a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity must be the perfection of our mental taste; nor can a man be satisfied with himself while he suspects, that any excellence or blemish in a discourse has passed him unobserved. In this case, the perfection of the man, and the perfection of the sense or feeling, are found to be united. A very delicate palate, on many occasions, may be a great inconvenience both to a man himself and to his friends: But a delicate taste of wit or beauty must always be a desirable quality; because it is the source of all the finest and most innocent enjoyments, of which human nature is susceptible. In this decision the sentiments of all mankind are agreed. Wherever you can ascertain a delicacy of taste, it is sure to meet with approbation; and the best way of ascertaining it is to appeal to those models and principles, which have been established by the uniform consent and experience of nations and ages.

But though there be naturally a wide difference in point of delicacy between one person and another, nothing tends further to encrease and improve this talent, than *practice* in a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty. When objects of any kind are first presented to the eye or imagination, the sentiment, which attends them, is obscure and confused; and the mind is, in a great measure, incapable of pronouncing concerning their merits or defects. The taste cannot perceive the several excellences of the performance; much less distinguish the particular character of each excellency, and ascertain its quality and degree. If it pronounce the whole in general to be beautiful or deformed, it is the utmost that can be expected; and even this judgment, a person, so unpractised,

will be apt to deliver with great hesitation and reserve. But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: He not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality, and assigns it suitable praise or blame. A clear and distinct sentiment attends him through the whole survey of the objects; and he discerns that very degree and kind of approbation or displeasure, which each part is naturally fitted to produce. The mist dissipates, which seemed formerly to hang over the object: The organ acquires greater perfection in its operations; and can pronounce, without danger of mistake, concerning the merits of every performance. In a word, the same address and dexterity, which practice gives to the execution of any work, is also acquired by the same means, in the judging of it.

So advantageous is practice to the discernment of beauty, that, before we can give judgment on any work of importance, it will even be requisite, that that very individual performance be more than once perused by us, and be surveyed in different lights with attention and deliberation. There is a flutter or hurry of thought which attends the first perusal of any piece, and which confounds the genuine sentiment of beauty. The relation of the parts is not discerned: The true characters of style are little distinguished: The several perfections and defects seem wrapped up in a species of confusion, and present themselves indistinctly to the imagination. Not to mention, that there is a species of beauty, which, as it is florid and superficial, pleases at first; but being found incompatible with a just expression either of reason or passion, soon falls upon the taste, and is then rejected with disdain, at least rated at a much lower value.

It is impossible to continue in the practice of contemplating any order of beauty, without being frequently obliged to form *comparisons* between the several species and degrees of excellence, and estimating their proportion to each other. A man, who has had no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty, is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to any object presented to him. By comparison alone we fix the epithets of praise or blame, and learn how to assign the due degree of each. The coarsest daubing contains a certain lustre of colours and

exactness of imitation, which are so far beauties, and would affect the mind of a peasant or Indian with the highest admiration. The most vulgar ballads are not entirely destitute of harmony or nature; and none but a person, familiarized to superior beauties, would pronounce their numbers harsh, or narration uninteresting. A great inferiority of beauty gives pain to a person conversant in the highest excellence of the kind, and is for that reason pronounced a deformity: As the most finished object, with which we are acquainted, is naturally supposed to have reached the pinnacle of perfection, and to be entitled to the highest applause. One accustomed to see, and examine, and weigh the several performances, admired in different ages and nations, can only rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view, and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius.

But to enable a critic the more fully to execute this undertaking, he must preserve his mind free from all *prejudice*, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object which is submitted to his examination. We may observe, that every work of art, in order to produce its due effect on the mind, must be surveyed in a certain point of view, and cannot be fully relished by persons, whose situation, real or imaginary, is not conformable to that which is required by the performance. An orator addresses himself to a particular audience, and must have a regard to their particular genius, interests, opinions, passions, and prejudices; otherwise he hopes in vain to govern their resolutions, and inflame their affections. Should they even have entertained some prepossessions against him, however unreasonable, he must not overlook this disadvantage; but, before he enters upon the subject, must endeavour to conciliate their affection, and acquire their good graces. A critic of a different age or nation, who should peruse this discourse, must have all these circumstances in his eye, and must place himself in the same situation as the audience, in order to form a true judgment of the oration. In like manner, when any work is addressed to the public, though I should have a friendship or enmity with the author, I must depart from this situation; and considering myself as a man in general, forget, if possible, my individual being and my peculiar circumstances. A person influenced by prejudice, complies not with this

condition; but obstinately maintains his natural position, without placing himself in that point of view, which the performance supposes. If the work be addressed to persons of a different age or nation, he makes no allowance for their peculiar views and prejudices; but, full of the manners of his own age and country, rashly condemns what seemed admirable in the eyes of those for whom alone the discourse was calculated. If the work be executed for the public, he never sufficiently enlarges his comprehension, or forgets his interest as a friend or enemy, as a rival or commentator. By this means, his sentiments are perverted; nor have the same beauties and blemishes the same influence upon him, as if he had imposed a proper violence on his imagination, and had forgotten himself for a moment. So far his taste evidently departs from the true standard; and of consequence loses all credit and authority.

It is well known, that in all questions, submitted to the understanding, prejudice is destructive of sound judgment, and perverts all operations of the intellectual faculties: It is no less contrary to good taste; nor has it less influence to corrupt our sentiment of beauty. It belongs to *good sense* to check its influence in both cases; and in this respect, as well as in many others, reason, if not an essential part of taste, is at least requisite to the operations of this latter faculty. In all the nobler productions of genius, there is a mutual relation and correspondence of parts; nor can either the beauties or blemishes be perceived by him, whose thought is not capacious enough to comprehend all those parts, and compare them with each other, in order to perceive the consistence and uniformity of the whole. Every work of art has also a certain end or purpose, for which it is calculated; and is to be deemed more or less perfect, as it is more or less fitted to attain this end. The object of eloquence is to persuade, of history to instruct, of poetry to please by means of the passions and the imagination. These ends we must carry constantly in our view, when we peruse any performance; and we must be able to judge how far the means employed are adapted to their respective purposes. Besides, every kind of composition, even the most poetical, is nothing but a chain of propositions and reasonings; not always, indeed, the justest and most exact, but still plausible and specious, however disguised by the colouring of the imagination. The persons intro-

duced in tragedy and epic poetry, must be represented as reasoning, and thinking, and concluding, and acting, suitably to their character and circumstances; and without judgment, as well as taste and invention, a poet can never hope to succeed in so delicate an undertaking. Not to mention, that the same excellence of faculties which contributes to the improvement of reason, the same clearness of conception, the same exactness of distinction, the same vivacity of apprehension, are essential to the operations of true taste, and are its infallible concomitants. It seldom, or never happens, that a man of sense, who has experience in any art, cannot judge of its beauty; and it is no less rare to meet with a man who has a just taste without a sound understanding.

Thus, though the principles of taste be universal, and, nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty. The organs of internal sensation are seldom so perfect as to allow the general principles their full play, and produce a feeling correspondent to those principles. They either labour under some defect, or are vitiated by some disorder; and by that means, excite a sentiment, which may be pronounced erroneous. When the critic has no delicacy, he judges without any distinction, and is only affected by the grosser and more palpable qualities of the object: The finer touches pass unnoticed and disregarded. Where he is not aided by practice, his verdict is attended with confusion and hesitation. Where no comparison has been employed, the most frivolous beauties, such as rather merit the name of defects, are the object of his admiration. Where he lies under the influence of prejudice, all his natural sentiments are perverted. Where good sense is wanting, he is not qualified to discern the beauties of design and reasoning, which are the highest and most excellent. Under some or other of these imperfections, the generality of men labour; and hence a true judge in the finer arts is observed, even during the most polished ages, to be so rare a character: Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty.

But where are such critics to be found? By what marks are they to be known? How distinguish them from pretenders? These questions are embarrassing; and seem to throw us back into the same uncertainty, from which, during the course of this essay, we have endeavoured to extricate ourselves.

But if we consider the matter aright, these are questions of fact, not of sentiment. Whether any particular person be endowed with good sense and a delicate imagination, free from prejudice, may often be the subject of dispute, and be liable to great discussion and enquiry: But that such a character is valuable and estimable will be agreed in by all mankind. Where these doubts occur, men can do no more than in other disputable questions, which are submitted to the understanding: They must produce the best arguments, that their invention suggests to them; they must acknowledge a true and decisive standard to exist somewhere, to wit, real existence and matter of fact; and they must have indulgence to such as differ from them in their appeals to this standard. It is sufficient for our present purpose, if we have proved, that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing, and that some men in general, however difficult to be particularly pitched upon, will be acknowledged by universal sentiment to have a preference above others.

But in reality the difficulty of finding, even in particulars, the standard of taste, is not so great as it is represented. Though in speculation, we may readily avow a certain criterion in science and deny it in sentiment, the matter is found in practice to be much more hard to ascertain in the former case than in the latter. Theories of abstract philosophy, systems of profound theology, have prevailed during one age: In a successive period, these have been universally exploded: Their absurdity has been detected: Other theories and systems have supplied their place, which again gave place to their successors: And nothing has been experienced more liable to the revolutions of chance and fashion than these pretended decisions of science. The case is not the same with the beauties of eloquence and poetry. Just expressions of passion and nature are sure, after a little time, to gain public applause, which they maintain for ever. Aristotle, and Plato, and Epicurus, and Descartes, may successively yield to each other: But Terence and Virgil maintain an

universal, undisputed empire over the minds of men. The abstract philosophy of Cicero has lost its credit: The vehemence of his oratory is still the object of our admiration.

Though men of delicate taste be rare, they are easily to be distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind. The ascendant, which they acquire, gives a prevalence to that lively approbation, with which they receive any productions of genius, and renders it generally predominant. Many men, when left to themselves, have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke, which is pointed out to them. Every convert to the admiration of the real poet or orator is the cause of some new conversion. And though prejudices may prevail for a time, they never unite in celebrating any rival to the true genius, but yield at last to the force of nature and just sentiment. Thus, though a civilized nation may easily be mistaken in the choice of their admired philosopher, they never have been found long to err, in their affection for a favorite epic or tragic author.

But notwithstanding all our endeavours to fix a standard of taste, and reconcile the discordant apprehensions of men, there still remain two sources of variation, which are not sufficient indeed to confound all the boundaries of beauty and deformity, but will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of our approbation or blame. The one is the different humours of particular men; the other, the particular manners and opinions of our age and country. The general principles of taste are uniform in human nature: Where men vary in their judgments, some defect or perversion in the faculties may commonly be remarked; proceeding either from prejudice, from want of practice, or want of delicacy; and there is just reason for approving one taste, and condemning another. But where there is such a diversity in the internal frame or external situation as is entirely blameless on both sides, and leaves no room to give one the preference above the other; in that case a certain degree of diversity in judgment is unavoidable, and we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments.

A young man, whose passions are warm, will be more sensibly touched with amorous and

tender images, than a man more advanced in years, who takes pleasure in wise, philosophical reflections concerning the conduct of life and moderation of the passions. At twenty, Ovid may be the favourite author; Horace at forty; and perhaps Tacitus at fifty. Vainly would we, in such cases, endeavour to enter into the sentiments of others, and divest ourselves of those propensities, which are natural to us. We choose our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humour and disposition. Mirth or passion, sentiment or reflection; whichever of these most predominates in our temper, it gives us a peculiar sympathy with the writer who resembles us.

One person is more pleased with the sublime; another with the tender; a third with raillery. One has a strong sensibility to blemishes, and is extremely studious of correctness: Another has a more lively feeling of beauties, and pardons twenty absurdities and defects for one elevated or pathetic stroke. The ear of this man is entirely turned towards conciseness and energy; that man is delighted with a copious, rich, and harmonious expression. Simplicity is affected by one; ornament by another. Comedy, tragedy, satire, odes, have each its partizans, who prefer that particular species of writing to all others. It is plainly an error in a critic, to confine his approbation to one species or style of writing, and condemn all the rest. But it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular turn and disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided.

For a like reason, we are more pleased, in the course of our reading, with pictures and characters, that resemble objects which are found in our own age or country, than with those which describe a different set of customs. It is not without some effort, that we reconcile ourselves to the simplicity of ancient manners, and behold princesses carrying water from the spring, and kings and heroes dressing their own victuals. We may allow in general, that the representation of such manners is no fault in the author, nor deformity in the piece; but we are not so sensibly touched with them. For this reason, comedy is not easily transferred from one age or nation to another. A Frenchman or Englishman is not

pleased with the Andria of Terence, or Clitia of Machiavel; where the fine lady, upon whom all the play turns, never once appears to the spectators, but is always kept behind the scenes, suitably to the reserved humour of the ancient Greeks and modern Italians. A man of learning and reflection can make allowance for these peculiarities of manners; but a common audience can never divest themselves so far of their usual ideas and sentiments, as to relish pictures which in no wise resemble them.

But here there occurs a reflection, which may, perhaps, be useful in examining the celebrated controversy concerning ancient and modern learning; where we often find the one side excusing any seeming absurdity in the ancients from the manners of the age, and the other refusing to admit this excuse, or at least, admitting it only as an apology for the author, not for the performance. In my opinion, the proper boundaries in this subject have seldom been fixed between the contending parties. Where any innocent peculiarities of manners are represented, such as those above mentioned, they ought certainly to be admitted; and a man, who is shocked with them, gives an evident proof of false delicacy and refinement. The poet's *monument more durable than brass*, must fall to the ground like common brick or clay, were men to make no allowance for the continual revolutions of manners and customs, and would admit of nothing but what was suitable to the prevailing fashion. Must we throw aside the pictures of our ancestors, because of their ruffs and fardingales? But where the ideas of morality and decency alter from one age to another, and where vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation; this must be allowed to disfigure the poem, and to be a real deformity. I cannot, nor is it proper I should, enter into such sentiments; and however I may excuse the poet, on account of the manners of his age, I never can relish the composition. The want of humanity and of decency, so conspicuous in the characters drawn by several of the ancient poets, even sometimes by Homer and the Greek tragedians, diminishes considerably the merit of their noble performances, and gives modern authors an advantage over them. We are not interested in the fortunes and sentiments of such rough heroes: We are displeased to find the limits

of vice and virtue so much confounded: And whatever indulgence we may give to the writer on account of his prejudices, we cannot prevail on ourselves to enter into his sentiments, or bear an affection to characters, which we plainly discover to be blameable.

The case is not the same with moral principles, as with speculative opinions of any kind. These are in continual flux and revolution. The son embraces a different system from the father. Nay, there scarcely is any man, who can boast of great constancy and uniformity in this particular. Whatever speculative errors may be found in the polite writings of any age or country, they detract but little from the value of those compositions. There needs but a certain turn of thought or imagination to make us enter into all the opinions, which then prevailed, and relish the sentiments or conclusions derived from them. But a very violent effort is requisite to change our judgment of manners, and excite sentiments of approbation or blame, love or hatred, different from those to which the mind from long custom has been familiarized. And where a man is confident of the rectitude of that moral standard, by which he judges, he is justly jealous of it, and will not pervert the sentiments of his heart for a moment, in complaisance to any writer whatsoever.

Of all speculative errors, those, which regard religion, are the most excusable in compositions of genius; nor is it ever permitted to judge of the civility or wisdom of any people, or even of single persons, by the grossness or refinement of their theological principles. The same good sense, that directs men in the ordinary occurrences of life, is not hearkened to in religious matters, which are supposed to be placed altogether above the cognizance of human reason. On this account, all the absurdities of the pagan system of theology must be overlooked by every critic, who would pretend to form a just notion of ancient poetry; and our posterity, in their turn, must have the same indulgence to their forefathers. No religious principles can ever be imputed as a fault to any poet, while they remain merely principles, and take not such strong possession of his heart, as to lay him under the imputation of *bigotry* or *superstition*. Where that happens, they confound the senti-

ments of morality, and alter the natural boundaries of vice and virtue. They are therefore eternal blemishes, according to the principle above mentioned; nor are the prejudices and false opinions of the age sufficient to justify them.

It is essential to the Roman catholic religion to inspire a violent hatred of every other worship, and to represent all pagans, mahometans, and heretics as the objects of divine wrath and vengeance. Such sentiments, though they are in reality very blameable, are considered as virtues by the zealots of that communion, and are represented in their tragedies and epic poems as a kind of divine heroism. This bigotry has disfigured two very fine tragedies of the French theatre. *Polieucte* and *Athalie*; where an intemperate zeal for particular modes of worship is set off with all the pomp imaginable, and forms the predominant character of the heroes. 'What is this,' says the sublime Ioad to Josabet, finding her in discourse with Mathan, the priest of Baal, 'Does the daughter of David speak to this traitor? Are you not afraid, lest the earth should open and pour forth flames to devour you both? Or lest these holy walls should fall and crush you together? What is his purpose? Why comes that enemy of God hither to poison the air, which we breathe, with his horrid presence?' Such sentiments are received with great applause on the theatre of Paris; but at London the spectators would be full as much pleased to hear Achilles tell Agamemnon, that he was a dog in his forehead, and a deer in his heart, or Jupiter threaten Juno with a sound drubbing, if she will not be quiet.

Religious principles are also a blemish in any polite composition, when they rise up to superstition, and intrude themselves into every sentiment, however remote from any connection with religion. It is no excuse for the poet, that the customs of his country had burthened life with so many religious ceremonies and observances, that no part of it was exempt from that yoke. It must for ever be ridiculous in Petrarch to compare his mistress Laura, to Jesus Christ. Nor is it less ridiculous in that agreeable libertine, Boccace, very seriously to give thanks to God Almighty and the ladies, for their assistance in defending him against his enemies.

Of Tragedy

David Hume

IT seems an unaccountable pleasure, which the Spectators of a well-written tragedy receive from sorrow, terror, anxiety, and other passions, that are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy. The more they are touched and affected, the more are they delighted with the spectacle; and as soon as the uneasy passions cease to operate, the piece is at an end. One scene of full joy and contentment and security is the utmost, that any composition of this kind can bear; and it is sure always to be the concluding one. If, in the texture of the piece, there be interwoven any scenes of satisfaction, they afford only faint gleams of pleasure, which are thrown in by way of variety, and in order to plunge the actors into deeper distress, by means of that contrast and disappointment. The whole art of the poet is employed, in rousing and supporting the compassion and indignation, the anxiety and resentment of his audience. They are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted, and never are so happy as when they employ tears, sobs, and cries to give vent to their sorrow, and relieve their heart, swoln with the tenderest sympathy and compassion.

The few critics who have had some tincture of philosophy, have remarked this singular phenomenon, and have endeavoured to account for it.

L'Abbe DUBOS, in his reflections on poetry and painting, asserts, that nothing is in general so disagreeable to the mind as the languid, listless state of indolence, into which it falls upon the removal of all passion and occupation. To get rid of this painful situation, it seeks every amusement and pursuit; business, gaming, shews, executions; whatever will rouse the passions, and take its attention from itself. No matter what the passion is: Let it be disagreeable, afflicting, melancholy, disordered; it is still better than that insipid languor, which arises from perfect tranquillity and repose.¹

It is impossible not to admit this account, as being, at least in part, satisfactory. You may observe, when there are several tables of gaming, that all the company run to those, where the deepest play is, even though they find not there the best players. The view, or, at least, imagination of high passions, arising from great loss or gain, affects the spectator by sympathy, gives him some touches of the same passions, and serves him for a momentary entertainment. It makes the time pass the easier with him, and is some relief to that oppression, under which men commonly labour, when left entirely to their own thoughts and meditations.

We find that common liars always magnify, in their narrations, all kinds of danger, pain, distress, sickness, deaths, murders, and cruelties; as well as joy, beauty, mirth, and magnificence. It is an absurd secret, which they have for pleasing their

company, fixing their attention, and attaching them to such marvellous relations, by the passions and emotions, which they excite.

There is, however, a difficulty in applying to the present subject, in its full extent, this solution, however ingenious and satisfactory it may appear. It is certain, that the same object of distress, which pleases in a tragedy, were it really set before us, would give the most unfeigned uneasiness; though it be then the most effectual cure to languor and indolence. Monsieur FONTENELLE seems to have been sensible of this difficulty; and accordingly attempts another solution of the phenomenon; at least makes some addition to the theory above mentioned.²

"Pleasure and pain," says he, "which are two sentiments so different in themselves, differ not so much in their cause. From the instance of tickling, it appears, that the movement of pleasure, pushed a little too far, becomes pain; and that the movement of pain, a little moderated, becomes pleasure. Hence it proceeds, that there is such a thing as a sorrow, soft and agreeable: It is a pain weakened and diminished. The heart likes naturally to be moved and affected. Melancholy objects suit it, and even disastrous and sorrowful, provided they are softened by some circumstance. It is certain, that, on the theatre, the representation has almost the effect of reality; yet it has not altogether that effect. However we may be hurried away by the spectacle; whatever dominion the senses and imagination may usurp over the reason, there still lurks at the bottom a certain idea of falsehood in the whole of what we see. This idea, though weak and disguised, suffices to diminish the pain which we suffer from the misfortunes of those whom we love, and to reduce that affliction to such a pitch as converts it into a pleasure. We weep for the misfortune of a hero, to whom we are attached. In the same instant we comfort ourselves, by reflecting, that it is nothing but a fiction: And it is precisely that mixture of sentiments, which composes an agreeable sorrow, and tears that delight us. But as that affliction, which is caused by exterior and sensible objects, is stronger than the consolation which arises from an internal reflection, they are the effects and symptoms of sorrow, that ought to predominate in the composition."

This solution seems just and convincing; but perhaps it wants still some new addition, in order to make it answer fully the phenomenon, which we here examine. All the passions, excited by eloquence, are agreeable in the highest degree, as well as those which are moved by painting and the theatre. The epilogues of CÍCERO are, on this account chiefly, the delight of every reader of taste; and it is difficult to read some of them without the deepest sympathy and sorrow. His merit as an orator, no doubt, depends much on his success in this particular. When he had raised tears in his judges and all his audience, they were then the most highly delighted, and expressed the greatest satisfaction with the pleader. The pathetic description of the butchery, made by VERRES of the SICILIAN captains,³ is a masterpiece of this kind: But I believe none will affirm, that the being present at a melancholy scene of that nature would afford any entertainment. Neither is the sorrow here softened by fiction: For the audience were convinced of the reality of every circumstance. What is it then, which in this case raises a pleasure from the bosom of uneasiness, so to speak; and a pleasure, which still retains all the features and outward symptoms of distress and sorrow?

I answer: This extraordinary effect proceeds from that very eloquence, with which the melancholy scene is represented. The genius required to paint objects in a lively manner, the art employed in collecting all the pathetic circumstances, the judgment displayed in disposing them: the exercise, I say, of these noble talents, together with the force of expression, and beauty of oratorical numbers, diffuse the highest satisfaction on the audience, and excite the most delightful movements. By this means, the uneasiness of the melancholy passions is not only overpowered and effaced by something stronger of an opposite kind; but the whole impulse of those passions is converted into pleasure, and swells the delight which the eloquence raises in us. The same force of oratory, employed on an uninteresting subject, would not please half so much, or rather would appear altogether ridiculous; and the mind, being left in absolute calmness and indifference, would relish none of those beauties of imagination or expression, which, if joined to passion, give it such exquisite entertainment. The impulse or vehemence, arising from sorrow, compassion,

indignation, receives a new direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter, being the predominant emotion, seize the whole mind, and convert the former into themselves, at least tincture them so strongly as totally to alter their nature. And the soul, being, at the same time, roused by passion, and charmed by eloquence, feels on the whole a strong movement, which is altogether delightful.

The same principle takes place in tragedy; with this addition, that tragedy is an imitation; and imitation is always of itself agreeable. This circumstance serves still farther to smooth the motions of passion, and convert the whole feeling into one uniform and strong enjoyment. Objects of the greatest terror and distress please in painting, and please more than the most beautiful objects, that appear calm and indifferent.⁴ The affection, rousing the mind, excites a large stock of spirit and vehemence; which is all transformed into pleasure by the force of the prevailing movement. It is thus the fiction of tragedy softens the passion, by an infusion of a new feeling, not merely by weakening or diminishing the sorrow. You may by degrees weaken a real sorrow, till it totally disappears; yet in none of its gradations will it ever give pleasure; except, perhaps, by accident, to a man sunk under lethargic indolence, whom it rouses from that languid state.

To confirm this theory, it will be sufficient to produce other instances, where the subordinate movement is converted into the predominant, and gives force to it, though of a different, and even sometimes though of a contrary nature.

Novelty naturally rouses the mind, and attracts our attention; and the movements, which it causes, are always converted into any passion, belonging to the object, and join their force to it. Whether an event excite joy or sorrow, pride or shame, anger or good-will, it is sure to produce a stronger affection, when new or unusual. And though novelty of itself be agreeable, it fortifies the painful, as well as agreeable passions.

Had you any intention to move a person extremely by the narration of any event, the best method of encreasing its effect would be artfully to delay informing him of it, and first to excite his curiosity and impatience before you let him into the secret. This is the artifice practised by IAGO in the famous scene of SHAKESPEARE; and every spectator is sensible, that OTHELLO's

jealousy acquires additional force from his preceding impatience, and that the subordinate passion is here readily transformed into the predominant one.⁵

Difficulties encrease passions of every kind; and by rousing our attention, and exciting our active powers, they produce an emotion, which nourishes the prevailing affection.

Parents commonly love that child most, whose sickly infirm frame of body has occasioned them the greatest pains, trouble, and anxiety in rearing him. The agreeable sentiment of affection here acquires force from sentiments of uneasiness.

Nothing endears so much a friend as sorrow for his death. The pleasure of his company has not so powerful an influence.

Jealousy is a painful passion; yet without some share of it, the agreeable affection of love has difficulty to subsist in its full force and violence. Absence is also a great source of complaint among lovers, and gives them the greatest uneasiness: Yet nothing is more favourable to their mutual passion than short intervals of that kind. And if long intervals often prove fatal, it is only because, through time, men are accustomed to them, and they cease to give uneasiness. Jealousy and absence in love compose the *dolce peccante* of the ITALIANS, which they suppose so essential to all pleasure.

There is a fine observation of the elder PLINY, which illustrates the principle here insisted on. *It is very remarkable, says he, that the last works of celebrated artists, which they left imperfect, are always the most prized, such as the IRIS of ARISTIDES, the TYNDARIDES of NICOMACHUS, the MEDEA of TIMOMACHUS, and the VENUS of APELLES. These are valued even above their finished productions: The broken lineaments of the piece, and the half-formed idea of the painter are carefully studied; and our very grief for that curious hand, which had been stopped by death, is an additional encrease to our pleasure.*⁶

These instances (and many more might be collected) are sufficient to afford us some insight into the analogy of nature, and to show us, that the pleasure, which poets, orators, and musicians give us, by exciting grief, sorrow, indignation, compassion, is not so extraordinary or paradoxical, as it may at first sight appear. The force of imagination, the energy of expression, the power of numbers, the charms of imitation; all these are

naturally, of themselves, delightful to the mind: And when the object presented lays also hold of some affection, the pleasure still rises upon us, by the conversion of this subordinate movement into that which is predominant. The passion, though, perhaps, naturally, and when excited by the simple appearance of a real object, it may be painful; yet is so smoothed, and softened, and mollified, when raised by the finer arts, that it affords the highest entertainment.

To confirm this reasoning, we may observe, that if the movements of the imagination be not predominant above those of the passion, a contrary effect follows; and the former, being now subordinate, is converted into the latter, and still farther encreases the pain and affliction of the sufferer.

Who could ever think of it as a good expedient for comforting an afflicted parent, to exaggerate, with all the force of elocution, the irreparable loss, which he has met with by the death of a favourite child? The more power of imagination and expression you here employ, the more you encrease his despair and affliction.

The shame, confusion, and terror of VERRES, no doubt, rose in proportion to the noble eloquence and vehemence of CICERO: So also did his pain and uneasiness. These former passions were too strong for the pleasure arising from the beauties of elocution; and operated, though from the same principle, yet in a contrary manner, to the sympathy, compassion, and indignation of the audience.

Lord CLARENDON, when he approaches towards the catastrophe of the royal party, supposes, that his narration must then become infinitely disagreeable; and he hurries over the king's death, without giving us one circumstance of it.⁷ He considers it as too horrid a scene to be contemplated with any satisfaction, or even without the utmost pain and aversion. He himself, as well as the readers of that age, were too deeply concerned in the events, and felt a pain from subjects, which an historian and a reader of another age would regard as the most pathetic and most interesting, and, by consequence, the most agreeable.

An action, represented in tragedy, may be too bloody and atrocious. It may excite such movements of horror as will not soften into pleasure; and the greatest energy of expression, bestowed on descriptions of that nature, serves only to augment our uneasiness. Such is that action

represented in the *Ambitious Stepmother*,⁸ where a venerable old man, raised to the height of fury and despair, rushes against a pillar, and striking his head upon it, besmears it all over with mingled brains and gore. The ENGLISH theatre abounds too much with such shocking images.

Even the common sentiments of compassion require to be softened by some agreeable affection, in order to give a thorough satisfaction to the audience. The mere suffering of plaintive virtue, under the triumphant tyranny and oppression of vice, forms a disagreeable spectacle, and is carefully avoided by all masters of the drama. In order to dismiss the audience with entire satisfaction and contentment, the virtue must either convert itself into a noble courageous despair, or the vice receive its proper punishment.

Most painters appear in this light to have been very unhappy in their subjects. As they wrought much for churches and convents, they have chiefly represented such horrible subjects as crucifixions and martyrdoms, where nothing appears but tortures, wounds, executions, and passive suffering, without any action or affection. When they turned their pencil from this ghastly mythology, they had commonly recourse to OVID, whose fictions, though passionate and agreeable, are scarcely natural or probable enough for painting.

The same inversion of that principle, which is here insisted on, displays itself in common life, as in the effects of oratory and poetry. Raise so the subordinate passion that it becomes the predominant, it swallows up that affection which it before nourished and encreased. Too much jealousy extinguishes love: Too much difficulty renders us indifferent: Too much sickness and infirmity disgusts a selfish and unkind parent.

What so disagreeable as the dismal, gloomy, disastrous stories, with which melancholy people entertain their companions? The uneasy passion being there raised alone, unaccompanied with any spirit, genius, or eloquence, conveys a pure uneasiness, and is attended with nothing that can soften it into pleasure or satisfaction.

Notes

- 1 [Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742), *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* (1719–33), translated as *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music* (1748), pt. 1, chap. 1.]

- 2 Reflexions sur la poetique, § 36. [Fontenelle, "Reflections on the Poetic," sec. 36, which is contained in his *Oeuvres*, 3:34.]
- 3 [Cicero, *Actionis Secundae in C. Verrem* (The second speech against Gaius Verres) 5.118–38).]
- 4 Painters make no scruple of representing distress and sorrow as well as any other passion: But they seem not to dwell so much on these melancholy affections as the poets, who, though they copy every motion of the human breast, yet pass quickly over the agreeable sentiments. A painter represents only one instant; and if that be passionate enough, it is sure to affect and delight the spectator: But nothing can furnish to the poet a variety of scenes and incidents and sentiments, except distress, terror, or anxiety. Compleat joy and satisfaction is attended with security, and leaves no farther room for action.
- 5 [Shakespeare, *Othello*, act 3, sc. 3.]
- 6 Illud vero perquam rarum ac memoria dignum, etiam suprema opera artificum, imperfectasque tabulas, sicut, IRIN ARISTIDIS, TYNDARIDAS NICOMACHI, MEDEAM TIMOMACHI, & quam diximus VENEREM APELLIS, in majori admiratione esse quam perfecta. Quippe in iis lineamenta reliqua, ipsæque cogitationes artificum spectantur, atque in lenocinio commendationis dolor est manus, cum id ageret, extinctæ. Lib. xxxv. cap. 11. [*Natural History*, bk. 35, chap. 40, in the Loeb edition.]
- 7 [Edward Hyde, First Earl of Clarendon (1609–74), *The True Historical Narrative of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (1702–04). See Clarendon's description of the events of 1649.]
- 8 [A tragedy by Nicholas Rowe (1674–1718), which was performed and printed in 1700.]

A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful

Edmund Burke

Sir Edmund Burke (1729–97) was an Irish political writer and statesman who early in his career wrote a work on art that marked a transition from the classical emphasis on intellectual clarity to the romantic stress on the imaginative power of the infinite.

Part One

Section II

Pain and pleasure

It seems then necessary towards moving the passions of people advanced in life to any considerable degree, that the objects designed for that purpose, besides their being in some measure new, should be capable of exciting pain or pleasure from other causes. Pain and pleasure are simple ideas, incapable of definition. People are not liable to be mistaken in their feelings, but they are very frequently wrong in the names they give them, and in their reasonings about them. Many are of opinion, that pain arises necessarily from the removal of some pleasure; as they think pleasure does from the ceasing or diminution of

some pain. For my part I am rather inclined to imagine, that pain and pleasure in their most simple and natural manner of affecting, are each of a positive nature, and by no means necessarily dependent on each other for their existence. The human mind is often, and I think it is for the most part, in a state neither of pain nor pleasure, which I call a state of indifference. When I am carried from this state into a state of actual pleasure, it does not appear necessary that I should pass through the medium of any sort of pain. If in such a state of indifference, or ease, or tranquillity, or call it what you please, you were to be suddenly entertained with a concert of music; or suppose some object of a fine shape, and bright lively colours to be presented before you; or imagine your smell is gratified with the fragrance of a rose; or if without any previous thirst you were to drink of some pleasant kind of wine; or to taste of some sweetmeat without being hungry; in all the several senses, of hearing, smelling, and tasting, you undoubtedly find a pleasure; yet if I

enquire into the state of your mind previous to these gratifications, you will hardly tell me that they found you in any kind of pain; or having satisfied these several senses with their several pleasures, will you say that any pain has succeeded, though the pleasure is absolutely over? Suppose on the other hand, a man in the same state of indifference, to receive a violent blow, or to drink of some bitter potion, or to have his ears wounded with some harsh and grating sound; here is no removal of pleasure; and yet here is felt, in every sense which is affected, a pain very distinguishable. It may be said perhaps, that the pain in these cases had its rise from the removal of the pleasure which the man enjoyed before, though that pleasure was of so low a degree as to be perceived only by the removal. But this seems to me a subtilty, that is not discoverable in nature. For if, previous to the pain, I do not feel any actual pleasure, I have no reason to judge that any such thing exists; since pleasure is only pleasure as it is felt. The same may be said of pain, and with equal reason. I can never persuade myself that pleasure and pain are mere relations, which can only exist as they are contrasted: but I think I can discern clearly that there are positive pains and pleasures, which do not at all depend upon each other. Nothing is more certain to my own feelings than this. There is nothing which I can distinguish in my mind with more clearness than the three states, of indifference, of pleasure, and of pain. [...]

Section VI

Of the passions which belong to self-preservation

Most of the ideas which are capable of making a powerful impression on the mind, whether simply of Pain or Pleasure, or of the modifications of those, may be reduced very nearly to these two heads, *self-preservation* and *society*; to the ends of one or the other of which all our passions are calculated to answer. The passions which concern self-preservation, turn mostly on *pain* or *danger*. The ideas of *pain*, *sickness*, and *death*, fill the mind with strong emotions of horror; but *life* and *health*, though they put us in a capacity of being affected with pleasure, they make no such impression by the simple enjoyment. The passions therefore which are conver-

sant about the preservation of the individual, turn chiefly on *pain* and *danger*, and they are the most powerful of all the passions.

Section VII

Of the sublime

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer, are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible body could enjoy. Nay I am in great doubt, whether any man could be found who would earn a life of the most perfect satisfaction, at the price of ending it in the torments, which justice inflicted in a few hours on the late unfortunate regicide in France. But as pain is stronger in its operation than pleasure, so death is in general a much more affecting idea than pain; because there are very few pains, however exquisite, which are not preferred to death; nay, what generally makes pain itself, if I may say so, more painful, is, that it is considered as an emissary of this king of terrors. When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience. The cause of this I shall endeavour to investigate hereafter.

Section XII

Sympathy, imitation, and ambition

Under this denomination of society, the passions are of a complicated kind, and branch out into a variety of forms agreeable to that variety of ends they are to serve in the great chain of society. The three principal links in this chain are *sympathy*, *imitation*, and *ambition*.

*Section XIII**Sympathy*

It is by the first of these passions that we enter into the concerns of others; that we are moved as they are moved, and are never suffered to be indifferent spectators of almost any thing which men can do or suffer. For sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected; so that this passion may either partake of the nature of those which regard self-preservation, and turning upon pain may be a source of the sublime; or it may turn upon ideas of pleasure; and then, whatever has been said of the social affections, whether they regard society in general, or only some particular modes of it, may be applicable here. It is by this principle chiefly that poetry, painting, and other affecting arts, transfuse their passions from one breast to another, and are often capable of grafting a delight on wretchedness, misery, and death itself. It is a common observation, that objects which in the reality would shock, are in tragical, and such like representations, the source of a very high species of pleasure. This taken as a fact, has been the cause of much reasoning. The satisfaction has been commonly attributed, first, to the comfort we receive in considering that so melancholy a story is no more than a fiction; and next, to the contemplation of our own freedom from the evils which we see represented. I am afraid it is a practice much too common in inquiries of this nature, to attribute the cause of feelings which merely arise from the mechanical structure of our bodies, or from the natural frame and constitution of our minds, to certain conclusions of the reasoning faculty on the objects presented to us; for I should imagine, that the influence of reason in producing our passions is nothing near so extensive as it is commonly believed.

*Section XIV**The effects of sympathy in the distresses of others*

To examine this point concerning the effect of tragedy in a proper manner, we must previously consider, how we are affected by the feelings of

our fellow creatures in circumstances of real distress. I am convinced we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others; for let the affection be what it will in appearance, if it does not make us shun such objects, if on the contrary it induces us to approach them, if it makes us dwell upon them, in this case I conceive we must have a delight or pleasure of some species or other in contemplating objects of this kind. Do we not read the authentic histories of scenes of this nature with as much pleasure as romances or poems, where the incidents are fictitious? The prosperity of no empire, nor the grandeur of no king, can so agreeably affect in the reading, as the ruin of the state of Macedon, and the distress of its unhappy prince. Such a catastrophe touches us in history as much as the destruction of Troy does in fable. Our delight in cases of this kind, is very greatly heightened, if the sufferer be some excellent person who sinks under an unworthy fortune. Scipio and Cato are both virtuous characters; but we are more deeply affected by the violent death of the one, and the ruin of the great cause he adhered to, than with the deserved triumphs and uninterrupted prosperity of the other; for terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close, and pity is a passion accompanied with pleasure, because it arises from love and social affection. Whenever we are formed by nature to any active purpose, the passion which animates us to it, is attended with delight, or a pleasure of some kind, let the subject matter be what it will; and as our Creator has designed we should be united by the bond of sympathy, he has strengthened that bond by a proportionable delight; and there most where our sympathy is most wanted, in the distresses of others. If this passion was simply painful, we would shun with the greatest care all persons and places that could excite such a passion; as, some who are so far gone in indolence as not to endure any strong impression actually do. But the case is widely different with the greater part of mankind; there is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue, as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity; so that whether the misfortune is before our eyes, or whether they are turned back to it in history, it always touches with delight. This is not an unmixed delight, but blended with no small uneasiness. The delight we have in such things,

hinders us from shunning scenes of misery; and the pain we feel prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer; and all this antecedent to any reasoning, by an instinct that works us to its own purposes, without our concurrence.

Section XV

Of the effects of tragedy

It is thus in real calamities. In imitated distresses the only difference is the pleasure resulting from the effects of imitation; for it is never so perfect, but we can perceive it is an imitation, and on that principle are somewhat pleased with it. And indeed in some cases we derive as much or more pleasure from that source than from the thing itself. But then I imagine we shall be much mistaken if we attribute any considerable part of our satisfaction in tragedy to a consideration that tragedy is a deceit, and its representations no realities. The nearer it approaches the reality, and the further it removes us from all idea of fiction, the more perfect is its power. But be its power of what kind it will, it never approaches to what it represents. Choose a day on which to represent the most sublime and affecting tragedy we have; appoint the most favourite actors; spare no cost upon the scenes and decorations; unite the greatest efforts of poetry, painting and music; and when you have collected your audience, just at the moment when their minds are erect with expectation, let it be reported that a state criminal of high rank is on the point of being executed in the adjoining square; in a moment the emptiness of the theatre would demonstrate the comparative weakness of the imitative arts, and proclaim the triumph of the real sympathy. I believe that this notion of our having a simple pain in the reality, yet a delight in the representation, arises from hence, that we do not sufficiently distinguish what we would by no means choose to do, from what we should be eager enough to see if it was once done. We delight in seeing things, which so far from doing, our heartiest wishes would be to see redressed. This noble capital, the pride of England and of Europe, I believe no man is so strangely wicked as to desire to see destroyed by a conflagration or an earthquake, though he should be removed himself to the greatest distance from the danger. But suppose such a fatal

accident have happened, what numbers from all parts would crowd to behold the ruins, and amongst them many who would have been content never to have seen London in its glory? Nor is it either in real or fictitious distresses, our immunity from them which produces our delight; in my own mind I can discover nothing like it. I apprehend that this mistake is owing to a sort of sophism, by which we are frequently imposed upon; it arises from our not distinguishing between what is indeed a necessary condition to our doing or suffering any thing in general, and what is the *cause* of some particular act. If a man kills me with a sword, it is a necessary condition to this that we should have been both of us alive before the fact; and yet it would be absurd to say, that our being both living creatures was the cause of his crime and of my death. So it is certain, that it is absolutely necessary my life should be out of any imminent hazard before I can take a delight in the sufferings of others, real or imaginary, or indeed in any thing else from any cause whatsoever. But then it is a sophism to argue from thence, that this immunity is the cause of my delight either on these or on any occasions. No one can distinguish such a cause of satisfaction in his own mind I believe; nay when we do not suffer any very acute pain, nor are exposed to any imminent danger of our lives, we can feel for others, whilst we suffer ourselves; and often then most when we are softened by affliction; we see with pity even distresses which we would accept in the place of our own.

Part Two

Section V

Power

Besides these things which *directly* suggest the idea of danger, and those which produce a similar effect from a mechanical cause, I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power. And this branch rises as naturally as the other two branches, from terror, the common stock of every thing that is sublime. The idea of power at first view, seems of the class of these indifferent ones, which may equally belong to pain or to pleasure. But in reality, the affection arising from the idea of vast power, is extremely remote from

that neutral character. For first, we must remember, that the idea of pain, in its highest degree, is much stronger than the highest degree of pleasure; and that it preserves the same superiority through all the subordinate gradations. From hence it is, that where the chances for equal degrees of suffering or enjoyment are in any sort equal, the idea of the suffering must always be prevalent. And indeed the ideas of pain, and above all of death, are so very affecting, that whilst we remain in the presence of whatever is supposed to have the power of inflicting either, it is impossible to be perfectly free from terror. Again, we know by experience, that for the enjoyment of pleasure, no great efforts of power are at all necessary; nay we know, that such efforts would go a great way towards destroying our satisfaction: for pleasure must be stolen, and not forced upon us; pleasure follows the will; and therefore we are generally affected with it by many things of a force greatly inferior to our own. But pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly. So that strength, violence, pain and terror, are ideas that rush in upon the mind together. Look at a man, or any other animal of prodigious strength, and what is your idea before reflection? Is it that this strength will be subservient to you, to your ease, to your pleasure, to your interest in any sense? No; the emotion you feel is, lest this enormous strength should be employed to the purposes of rapine and destruction. That power derives all its sublimity from the terror with which it is generally accompanied, will appear evidently from its effect in the very few cases, in which it may be possible to strip a considerable degree of strength of its ability to hurt. When you do this, you spoil it of every thing sublime, and it immediately becomes contemptible. An ox is a creature of vast strength; but he is an innocent creature, extremely serviceable, and not at all dangerous; for which reason the idea of an ox is by no means grand. A bull is strong too; but his strength is of another kind; often very destructive, seldom (at least amongst us) of any use in our business; the idea of a bull is therefore great, and it has frequently a place in sublime descriptions, and elevating comparison. Let us look at another strong animal in the two distinct lights in which we may consider him. The horse in the light of an useful beast, fit for the

plough, the road, the draft, in every social useful light the horse has nothing of the sublime; but is it thus that we are affected with him, *whose neck is cloathed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage, neither believeth that it is the sound of the trumpet?* In this description the useful character of the horse entirely disappears, and the terrible and sublime blaze out together. We have continually about us animals of a strength that is considerable, but not pernicious. Amongst these we never look for the sublime: it comes upon us in the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness, in the form of the lion, the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros. Whenever strength is only useful, and employed for our benefit or our pleasure, then it is never sublime; for nothing can act agreeably to us, that does not act in conformity to our will; but to act agreeably to our will, it must be subject to us; and therefore can never be the cause of a grand and commanding conception. The description of the wild ass, in Job, is worked up into no small sublimity, merely by insisting on his freedom, and his setting mankind at defiance; otherwise the description of such an animal could have had nothing noble in it. *Who hath loosed (says he) the bands of the wild ass? whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the voice of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture.* The magnificent description of the unicorn and of leviathan in the same book, is full of the same heightening circumstances. *Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee? canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? wilt thou trust him because his strength is great? – Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?* In short, wheresoever we find strength, and in what light soever we look upon power, we shall all along observe the sublime the concomitant of terror, and contempt the attendant on a strength that is subservient and innoxious. [...]

In the scripture, wherever God is represented as appearing or speaking, every thing terrible in nature is called up to heighten the awe and solemnity of the divine presence. The psalms, and the prophetic books, are crowded with instances of this kind. *The earth shook* (says the psalmist) *the*

heavens also dropped at the presence of the Lord. And what is remarkable, the painting preserves the same character, not only when he is supposed descending to take vengeance upon the wicked, but even when he exerts the like plenitude of power in acts of beneficence to mankind. *Tremble, thou earth! at the presence of the Lord; at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.* It were endless to enumerate all the passages both in the sacred and profane writers, which establish the general sentiment of mankind, concerning the inseparable union of a sacred and reverential awe, with our ideas of the divinity. [. . .] Thus we have traced power through its several gradations unto the highest of all, where our imagination is finally lost; and we find terror quite throughout the progress, its inseparable companion, and growing along with it, as far as we can possibly trace them. Now as power is undoubtedly a capital source of the sublime, this will point out evidently from whence its energy is derived, and to what class of ideas we ought to unite it.

Section VII *Vastness*

Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime. This is too evident, and the observation too common, to need any illustration; it is not so common, to consider in what ways greatness of dimension, vastness of extent, or quantity, has the most striking effect. For certainly, there are ways, and modes, wherein the same quantity of extension shall produce greater effects than it is found to do in others. Extension is either in length, height, or depth. Of these the length strikes least; an hundred yards of even ground will never work such an effect as a tower an hundred yards high, or a rock or mountain of that altitude. I am apt to imagine likewise, that height is less grand than depth; and that we are more struck at looking down from a precipice, than at looking up at an object of equal height, but of that I am not very positive. A perpendicular has more force in forming the sublime, than an inclined plane; and the effects of a rugged and broken surface seem stronger than where it is smooth and polished. It would carry us out of our way to enter in this place into the cause of these

appearances; but certain it is they afford a large and fruitful field of speculation. [. . .]

Section VIII *Infinity*

Another source of the sublime, is *infinity*; if it does not rather belong to the last. Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime. There are scarce any things which can become the objects of our senses that are really, and in their own nature infinite. But the eye not being able to perceive the bounds of many things, they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effects as if they were really so. We are deceived in the like manner, if the parts of some large object are so continued to any indefinite number, that the imagination meets no check which may hinder its extending them at pleasure. [. . .]

Section XII *Difficulty*

Another source of greatness is *Difficulty*. When any work seems to have required immense force and labour to effect it, the idea is grand. Stone-henge, neither for disposition nor ornament, has any thing admirable; but those huge rude masses of stone, set on end, and piled each on other, turn the mind on the immense force necessary for such a work. Nay the rudeness of the work increases this cause of grandeur, as it excludes the idea of art, and contrivance; for dexterity produces another sort of effect which is different enough from this.

Section XIII *Magnificence*

Magnificence is likewise a source of the sublime. A great profusion of things which are splendid or valuable in themselves, is *magnificent*. The starry heaven, though it occurs so very frequently to our view, never fails to excite an idea of grandeur. This cannot be owing to any thing in the stars themselves, separately considered. The number is certainly the cause. The apparent disorder

augments the grandeur, for the appearance of care is highly contrary to our ideas of magnificence. Besides, the stars lye in such apparent confusion, as makes it impossible on ordinary occasions to reckon them. This gives them the advantage of a sort of infinity. In works of art, this kind of grandeur, which consists in multitude, is to be very cautiously admitted; because, a profusion of excellent things is not to be attained, or with too much difficulty; and, because in many cases this splendid confusion would destroy all use, which should be attended to in most of the works of art with the greatest care; besides it is to be considered, that unless you can produce an appearance of infinity by your disorder, you will have disorder only without magnificence. There are, however, a sort of fireworks, and some other things, that in this way succeed well, and are truly grand. There are also many descriptions in the poets and orators which owe their sublimity to a richness and profusion of images, in which the mind is so dazzled as to make it impossible to attend to that exact coherence and agreement of the allusions, which we should require on every other occasion. [...]

Part Three

Section XII

The real cause of beauty

Having endeavoured to show what beauty is not, it remains that we should examine, at least with equal attention, in what it really consists. Beauty is a thing much too affecting not to depend upon some positive qualities. And, since it is no creature of our reason, since it strikes us without any reference to use, and even where no use at all can be discerned, since the order and method of nature is generally very different from our measures and proportions, we must conclude that beauty is, for the greater part, some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses. We ought therefore to consider attentively in what manner those sensible qualities are disposed, in such things as by experience we find beautiful, or which excite in us the passion of love, or some correspondent affection.

Section XIII

Beautiful objects small

The most obvious point that presents itself to us in examining any object, is its extent or quantity. [...] A great beautiful thing, is a manner of expression scarcely ever used; but that of a great ugly thing, is very common. There is a wide difference between admiration and love. The sublime, which is the cause of the former, always dwells on great objects, and terrible; the latter on small ones, and pleasing; we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us; in one case we are forced, in the other we are flattered into compliance. In short, the ideas of the sublime and the beautiful stand on foundations so different, that it is hard, I had almost said impossible, to think of reconciling them in the same subject, without considerably lessening the effect of the one or the other upon the passions. So that attending to their quantity, beautiful objects are comparatively small.

Section XIV

Smoothness

The next property constantly observable in such objects is *Smoothness*. A quality so essential to beauty, that I do not now recollect any thing beautiful that is not smooth. In trees and flowers, smooth leaves are beautiful; smooth slopes of earth in gardens; smooth streams in the landscape; smooth coats of birds and beasts in animal beauties; in fine women, smooth skins; and in several sorts of ornamental furniture, smooth and polished surfaces. A very considerable part of the effect of beauty is owing to this quality; indeed the most considerable. For take any beautiful object, and give it a broken and rugged surface, and however well formed it may be in other respects, it pleases no longer. Whereas let it want ever so many of the other constituents, if it wants not this, it becomes more pleasing than almost all the others without it. This seems to me so evident, that I am a good deal surprised, that none who have handled the subject have made any mention of the quality of smoothness in the enumeration of those that go to the forming of beauty. For indeed any ruggedness, any sudden projection,

any sharp angle, is in the highest degree contrary to that idea.

Section XV

Gradual variation

But as perfectly beautiful bodies are not composed of angular parts, so their parts never continue long in the same right line. They vary their direction every moment, and they change under the eye by a deviation continually carrying on, but for whose beginning or end you will find it difficult to ascertain a point. The view of a beautiful bird will illustrate this observation. Here we see the head increasing insensibly to the middle, from whence it lessens gradually until it mixes with the neck; the neck loses itself in a larger swell, which continues to the middle of the body, when the whole decreases again to the tail; the tail takes a new direction; but it soon varies its new course; it blends again with the other parts; and the line is perpetually changing, above, below, upon every side. In this description I have before me the idea of a dove; it agrees very well with most of the conditions of beauty. It is smooth and downy; its parts are (to use that expression) melted into one another; you are presented with no sudden protuberance through the whole, and yet the whole is continually changing. [...]

Section XVI

Delicacy

An air of robustness and strength is very prejudicial to beauty. An appearance of *delicacy*, and even of fragility, is almost essential to it. Whoever examines the vegetable or animal creation, will find this observation to be founded in nature. It is not the oak, the ash, or the elm, or any of the robust trees of the forest, which we consider as beautiful; they are awful and majestic; they inspire a sort of reverence. It is the delicate myrtle, it is the orange, it is the almond, it is the jessamine, it is the vine, which we look on as vegetable beauties. It is the flowery species, so remarkable for its weakness and momentary duration, that gives us the liveliest idea of beauty, and elegance. [...]

Section XVII

Beauty in colour

As to the colours usually found in beautiful bodies; it may be somewhat difficult to ascertain them, because in the several parts of nature, there is an infinite variety. However, even in this variety, we may mark out something on which to settle. First, the colours of beautiful bodies must not be dusky or muddy, but clean and fair. Secondly, they must not be of the strongest kind. Those which seem most appropriated to beauty, are the milder of every sort; light greens; soft blues; weak whites; pink reds; and violets. Thirdly, if the colours be strong and vivid, they are always diversified, and the object is never of one strong colour; there are almost always such a number of them (as in variegated flowers) that the strength and glare of each is considerably abated. [...]

Section XXVII

The sublime and beautiful compared

On closing this general view of beauty, it naturally occurs, that we should compare it with the sublime; and in this comparison there appears a remarkable contrast. For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; and however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passions. In the infinite variety of natural combinations we must expect to find the qualities of things the most remote imaginable from each other united in the same object. We must expect also to find combinations of the same kind in the works of art. But when we consider the power of an object

upon our passions, we must know that when any thing is intended to affect the mind by the force of some predominant property, the affection produced is like to be the more uniform and perfect, if all the other properties or qualities of the object be of the same nature, and tending to the same design as the principal;

If black, and white blend, soften, and unite,
A thousand ways, are there no black and white?

If the qualities of the sublime and beautiful are sometimes found united, does this prove, that they are the same, does it prove, that they are any way allied, does it prove even that they are not opposite and contradictory? Black and white may soften, may blend, but they are not therefore the same. Nor when they are so softened and blended with each other, or with different colours, is the power of black as black, or of white as white, so strong as when each stands uniform and distinguished.

Part Four

Section V

How the sublime is produced

Having considered terror as producing an unnatural tension and certain violent emotions of the nerves; it easily follows, from what we have just said, that whatever is fitted to produce such a tension, must be productive of a passion similar to terror, and consequently must be a source of the sublime, though it should have no idea of danger connected with it. So that little remains towards showing the cause of the sublime, but to show that the instances we have given of it in the second part, relate to such things, as are fitted by nature to produce this sort of tension, either by the primary operation of the mind or the body. With regard to such things as affect by the associated idea of danger, there can be no doubt but that they produce terror, and act by some modification of that passion; and that terror, when sufficiently violent, raises the emotions of the body just mentioned, can as little be doubted. But if the sublime is built on terror, or some passion like it, which has pain for its object; it is previ-

ously proper to enquire how any species of delight can be derived from a cause so apparently contrary to it. I say, delight, because, as I have often remarked, it is very evidently different in its cause, and in its own nature, from actual and positive pleasure.

Section VI

How pain can be a cause of delight

Providence has so ordered it, that a state of rest and inaction, however it may flatter our indolence, should be productive of many inconveniences; that it should generate such disorders, as may force us to have recourse to some labour, as a thing absolutely requisite to make us pass our lives with tolerable satisfaction; for the nature of rest is to suffer all the parts of our bodies to fall into a relaxation, that not only disables the members from performing their functions, but takes away the vigorous tone of fibre which is requisite for carrying on the natural and necessary secretions. At the same time, that in this languid inactive state, the nerves are more liable to the most horrid convulsions, than when they are sufficiently braced and strengthened. Melancholy, dejection, despair, and often self-murder, is the consequence of the gloomy view we take of things in this relaxed state of body. The best remedy for all these evils is exercise or labour; and labour is a surmounting of difficulties, an exertion of the contracting power of the muscles; and as such resembles pain, which consists in tension or contraction, in every thing but degree. Labour is not only requisite to preserve the coarser organs in a state fit for their functions, but it is equally necessary to these finer and more delicate organs, on which, and by which, the imagination, and perhaps the other mental powers act. Since it is probable, that not only the inferior parts of the soul, as the passions are called, but the understanding itself makes use of some fine corporeal instruments in its operation; though what they are, and where they are, may be somewhat hard to settle: but that it does make use of such, appears from hence; that a long exercise of the mental powers induce a remarkable lassitude of the whole body; and on the other hand, that great bodily labour, or pain, weakens,

and sometimes actually destroys the mental faculties. Now, as a due exercise is essential to the coarse muscular parts of the constitution, and that without this rousing they would become

languid, and diseased, the very same rule holds with regard to those finer parts we have mentioned; to have them in proper order, they must be shaken and worked to a proper degree.

Laocoon

Gotthold Lessing

Gotthold Lessing (1729–81) was a German philosopher, dramatist, and critic, whose emphasis on the free expression of passion paved the way toward romanticism.

II

Be it truth or fable that Love made the first attempt in the imitative arts, thus much is certain: that she never tired of guiding the hand of the great masters of antiquity. For although painting, as the art which reproduces objects upon flat surfaces, is now practised in the broadest sense of that definition, yet the wise Greek set much narrower bounds to it. He confined it strictly to the imitation of beauty. The Greek artist represented nothing that was not beautiful. Even the vulgarly beautiful, the beauty of inferior types, he copied only incidentally for practice or recreation. The perfection of the subject must charm in his work. He was too great to require the beholders to be satisfied with the mere barren pleasure arising from a successful likeness or from consideration

of the artist's skill. Nothing in his art was dearer to him or seemed to him more noble than the ends of art. [. . .]

III

[. . .] [T]he realm of art has in modern times been greatly enlarged. Its imitations are allowed to extend over all visible nature, of which beauty constitutes but a small part. Truth and expression are taken as its first law. As nature always sacrifices beauty to higher ends, so should the artist subordinate it to his general purpose, and not pursue it further than truth and expression allow. Enough that truth and expression convert what is unsightly in nature into a beauty of art.

Allowing this idea to pass unchallenged at present for whatever it is worth, are there not other independent considerations which should set bounds to expression, and prevent the artist from choosing for his imitation the culminating point of any action?

The single moment of time to which art must confine itself, will lead us, I think, to such considerations. Since the artist can use but a single

moment of ever-changing nature, and the painter must further confine his study of this one moment to a single point of view, while their works are made not simply to be looked at, but to be contemplated long and often, evidently the most fruitful moment and the most fruitful aspect of that moment must be chosen. Now that only is fruitful which allows free play to the imagination. The more we see the more we must be able to imagine; and the more we imagine, the more we must think we see. But no moment in the whole course of an action is so disadvantageous in this respect as that of its culmination. There is nothing beyond, and to present the uttermost to the eye is to bind the wings of Fancy, and compel her, since she cannot soar beyond the impression made on the senses, to employ herself with feebler images, shunning as her limit the visible fulness already expressed. When, for instance, Laocoon sighs, imagination can hear him cry; but if he cry, imagination can neither mount a step higher, nor fall a step lower, without seeing him in a more endurable, and therefore less interesting, condition. We hear him merely groaning, or we see him already dead.

Again, since this single moment receives from art an unchanging duration, it should express nothing essentially transitory. All phenomena, whose nature it is suddenly to break out and as suddenly to disappear, which can remain as they are but for a moment; all such phenomena, whether agreeable or otherwise, acquire through the perpetuity conferred upon them by art such an unnatural appearance, that the impression they produce becomes weaker with every fresh observation, till the whole subject at last wearies or disgusts us. La Mettrie, who had himself painted and engraved as a second Democritus, laughs only the first time we look at him. Looked at again, the philosopher becomes a buffoon, and his laugh a grimace. So it is with a cry. Pain, which is so violent as to extort a scream, either soon abates or it must destroy the sufferer. Again, if a man of firmness and endurance cry, he does not do so unceasingly, and only this apparent continuity in art makes the cry degenerate into womanish weakness or childish impatience. This, at least, the sculptor of the Laocoon had to guard against, even had a cry not been an offence against beauty, and were suffering without beauty a legitimate subject of art. [. . .]

IV

A review of the reasons here alleged for the moderation observed by the sculptor of The Laocoon in the expression of bodily pain, shows them to lie wholly in the peculiar object of his art and its necessary limitations. Scarce one of them would be applicable to poetry.

Without inquiring here how far the poet can succeed in describing physical beauty, so much at least is clear, that since the whole infinite realm of perfection lies open for his imitation, this visible covering under which perfection becomes beauty will be one of his least significant means of interesting us in his characters. Indeed, he often neglects it altogether, feeling sure that if his hero has gained our favor, his nobler qualities will either so engross us that we shall not think of his body, or have so won us that, if we think of it, we shall naturally attribute to him a beautiful, or, at least, no unsightly one. Least of all will he have reference to the eye in every detail not especially addressed to the sense of sight. When Virgil's Laocoon screams, who stops to think that a scream necessitates an open mouth, and that an open mouth is ugly? Enough that "*clamores horrendos ad sidera tollit*" is fine to the ear, no matter what its effect on the eye. Whoever requires a beautiful picture has missed the whole intention of the poet.

Further, nothing obliges the poet to concentrate his picture into a single moment. He can take up every action, if he will, from its origin, and carry it through all possible changes to its issue. Every change, which would require from the painter a separate picture, costs him but a single touch; a touch, perhaps, which, taken by itself, might offend the imagination, but which, anticipated, as it has been, by what preceded, and softened and atoned for by what follows, loses its individual effect in the admirable result of the whole. Thus were it really unbecoming in a man to cry out in the extremity of bodily pain, how can this momentary weakness lower in our estimation a character whose virtues have previously won our regard? Virgil's Laocoon cries; but this screaming Laocoon is the same we know and love as the most far-seeing of patriots and the tenderest of fathers. We do not attribute the cry to his character, but solely to his intolerable sufferings. We hear in it only those, nor could

they have been made sensible to us in any other way.

Who blames the poet, then? Rather must we acknowledge that he was right in introducing the cry, as the sculptor was in omitting it. [. . .]

VIII

[. . .] The gods and other spiritual beings represented by the artist are not precisely the same as those introduced by the poet. To the artist they are personified abstractions which must always be characterized in the same way, or we fail to recognize them. In poetry, on the contrary, they are real beings, acting and working, and possessing, besides their general character, qualities and passions which may upon occasion take precedence. Venus is to the sculptor simply love. He must therefore endow her with all the modest beauty, all the tender charms, which, as delighting us in the beloved object, go to make up our abstract idea of love. The least departure from this ideal prevents our recognizing her image. Beauty distinguished more by majesty than modesty is no longer Venus but Juno. Charms commanding and manly rather than tender, give us, instead of a Venus, a Minerva. A Venus all wrath, a Venus urged by revenge and rage, is to the sculptor a contradiction in terms. For love, as love, never is angry, never avenges itself. To the poet, Venus is love also, but she is the goddess of love, who has her own individuality outside of this one characteristic, and can therefore be actuated by aversion as well as affection. What wonder, then, that in poetry she blazes into anger and rage, especially under the provocation of insulted love?

The artist, indeed, like the poet, may, in works composed of several figures, introduce Venus or any other deity, not simply by her one characteristic, but as a living, acting being. But the actions, if not the direct results of her character, must not be at variance with it. Venus delivering to her son the armor of the gods is a subject equally suitable to artist and poet. For here she can be endowed with all the grace and beauty befitting the goddess of love. Such treatment will be of advantage as helping us the more easily to recognize her. But when Venus, intent on revenging herself on her contemners, the men of Lemnos, wild, in colossal

shape, with cheeks inflamed and dishevelled hair, seizes the torch, and, wrapping a black robe about her, flies downward on the storm-cloud, – that is no moment for the painter, because he has no means of making us recognize her. The poet alone has the privilege of availing himself of it. He can unite it so closely with some other moment when the goddess is the true Venus, that we do not in the fury forget the goddess of love. Flaccus does this, –

Gracious the goddess is not emulous to appear,
nor does she bind her hair with the burnished
gold, letting her starry tresses float about her.
Wild she is and huge, her cheeks suffused with
spots; most like to the Stygian virgins with crack-
ling torch and black mantle.

And Statius also, –

Leaving ancient Paphos and the hundred altars,
not like her former self in countenance or the
fashion of her hair, she is said to have loosened
the nuptial girdle and have sent away her doves.
Some report that in the dead of night, bearing
other fires and mightier arms, she had hasted
with the Tartarean sisters to bed-chambers, and
filled the secret places of homes with twining
snakes, and all thresholds with cruel fear.

Or, we may say, the poet alone possesses the art of so combining negative with positive traits as to unite two appearances in one. No longer now the tender Venus, her hair no more confined with golden clasps, no azure draperies floating about her, without her girdle, armed with other flames and larger arrows, the goddess hastens downward, attended by furies of like aspect with herself. Must the poet abstain from the use of this device because artists are debarred from it? If painting claim to be the sister of poetry, let the younger at least not be jealous of the elder, nor seek to deprive her of ornaments unbecoming to herself.

XIII

If Homer's works were completely destroyed, and nothing remained of the Iliad and Odyssey but this series of pictures proposed by Caylus, should we from these – even supposing them to be executed by the best masters – form the same

idea that we now have of the poet's descriptive talent alone, setting aside all his other qualities as a poet?

Let us take the first piece that comes to hand, – the picture of the plague. What do we see on the canvas? Dead bodies, the flame of funeral pyres, the dying busied with the dead, the angry god upon a cloud discharging his arrows. The profuse wealth of the picture becomes poverty in the poet. Should we attempt to restore the text of Homer from this picture, what can we make him say? "Thereupon the wrath of Apollo was kindled, and he shot his arrows among the Grecian army. Many Greeks died, and their bodies were burned." Now let us turn to Homer himself:

Down he came,
Down from the summit of the Olympian
mount,
Wrathful in heart; his shoulders bore the bow
And hollow quiver; there the arrows rang
Upon the shoulders of the angry god,
As on he moved. He came as comes the night,
And, seated from the ships aloof, sent forth
An arrow; terrible was heard the clang
Of that resplendent bow. At first he smote
The mules and the swift dogs, and then on
man
He turned the deadly arrow. All around
Glared evermore the frequent funeral piles.¹

The poet here is as far beyond the painter, as life is better than a picture. Wrathful, with bow and quiver, Apollo descends from the Olympian towers. I not only see him, but hear him. At every step the arrows rattle on the shoulders of the angry god. He enters among the host like the night. Now he seats himself over against the ships, and, with a terrible clang of the silver bow, sends his first shaft against the mules and dogs. Next he turns his poisoned darts upon the warriors themselves, and unceasing blaze on every side of corpse-laden pyres. It is impossible to translate into any other language the musical painting heard in the poet's words. Equally impossible would it be to infer it from the canvas. Yet this is the least of the advantages possessed by the poetical picture. Its chief superiority is that it leads us through a whole gallery of pictures up to the point depicted by the artist.

But the plague is perhaps not a favorable subject for a picture. Take the council of the gods, which is more particularly addressed to the eye. An open palace of gold, groups of the fairest and most majestic forms, goblet in hand, served by eternal youth in the person of Hebe. What architecture! what masses of light and shade! what contrasts! what variety of expression! Where shall I begin, where cease, to feast my eyes? If the painter thus enchant me, how much more will the poet! I open the book and find myself deceived. I read four good, plain lines, which might very appropriately be written under the painting. They contain material for a picture, but are in themselves none.

Meantime the immortal gods with Jupiter
Upon his golden pavement sat and held
A council. Hebe, honored of them all,
Ministered nectar, and from cups of gold
They pledged each other, looking down on
Troy.²

Apollonius, or a more indifferent poet still, would not have said it worse. Here Homer is as far behind the artist as, in the former instance, he surpassed him.

Yet, except in these four lines, Caylus finds no single picture in the whole fourth book of the Iliad. "Rich as this book is," he says, "in its manifold exhortations to battle, in the abundance of its conspicuous and contrasting characters, in the skill with which the masses to be set in motion are brought before us, it is yet entirely unavailable for painting." "Rich as it otherwise is," he might have added, "in what are called poetic pictures." For surely in this fourth book we find as many such pictures, and as perfect, as in any of the whole poem. Where is there a more detailed, a more striking picture than that of Pandarus breaking the truce at the instigation of Minerva, and discharging his arrow at Menelaus? than that of the advance of the Grecian army? or of the mutual attack? or of the deed of Ulysses, whereby he avenges the death of his friend Leucus?

What must we conclude, except that not a few of the finest pictures in Homer are no pictures for the artist? that the artist can extract pictures from him where he himself has none? that such of his as the artist can use would be poor indeed did they show us no more than we see on the

canvas? what, in short, but a negative answer to my question? Painted pictures drawn from the poems of Homer, however numerous and however admirable they may be, can give us no idea of the descriptive talent of the poet.

XIV

If it, then, be true that a poem not in itself picturesque may yet be rich in subjects for an artist, while another in a high degree picturesque may yield him nothing, this puts an end to the theory of Count Caylus, that the test of a poem is its availability for the artist, and that a poet's rank should depend upon the number of pictures he supplies to the painter.

Far be it from us to give this theory even the sanction of our silence. Milton would be the first to fall an innocent victim. Indeed, the contemptuous judgment which Caylus passes upon the English poet would seem to be the result not so much of national taste as of this assumed rule. Milton resembles Homer, he says, in little excepting loss of sight. Milton, it is true, can fill no picture galleries. But if, so long as I retained my bodily eye, its sphere must be the measure of my inward vision, then I should esteem its loss a gain, as freeing me from such limitations.

The fact that "Paradise Lost" furnishes few subjects for a painter no more prevents it from being the greatest epic since Homer, than the story of the passion of Christ becomes a poem, because you can hardly insert the head of a pin in any part of the narrative without touching some passage which has employed a crowd of the greatest artists. The evangelists state their facts with the dryest possible simplicity, and the painter uses their various details while the narrators themselves manifested not the smallest spark of genius for the picturesque. There are picturesque and unpicturesque facts, and the historian may relate the most picturesque without picturesqueness, as the poet can make a picture of those least adapted to the painter's use.

To regard the matter otherwise is to allow ourselves to be misled by the double meaning of a word. A picture in poetry is not necessarily one which can be transferred to canvas. But every touch, or every combination of touches, by means of which the poet brings his subject so vividly

before us that we are more conscious of the subject than of his words, is picturesque, and makes what we call a picture; that is, it produces that degree of illusion which a painted picture is peculiarly qualified to excite, and which we in fact most frequently and naturally experience in the contemplation of the painted canvas.

XV

Experience shows that the poet can produce this degree of illusion by the representation of other than visible objects. He therefore has at his command whole classes of subjects which elude the artist. Dryden's "Ode on Cecilia's Day" is full of musical pictures, but gives no employment to the brush. But I will not lose myself in examples of this kind, for they after all teach us little more than that colors are not tones, and ears not eyes.

I will confine myself to pictures of visible objects, available alike to poet and painter. What is the reason that many poetical pictures of this class are unsuitable for the painter, while many painted pictures lose their chief effect in the hands of the poet?

Examples may help us. I revert to the picture of Pandarus in the fourth book of the *Iliad*, as one of the most detailed and graphic in all Homer. From the seizing of the bow to the flight of the arrow every incident is painted; and each one follows its predecessor so closely, and yet is so distinct from it, that a person who knew nothing of the use of a bow could learn it from this picture alone. Pandarus brings forth his bow, attaches the string, opens the quiver, selects a well-feathered arrow never before used, adjusts the notch of the arrow to the string, and draws back both string and arrow; the string approaches his breast, the iron point of the arrow nears the bow, the great arched bow springs back with a mighty twang, the cord rings, and away leaps the eager arrow speeding towards the mark.

Caylus cannot have overlooked this admirable picture. What, then, did he find which made him judge it no fitting subject for an artist? And what in the council and carousal of the gods made that seem more adapted to his purpose? The subjects are visible in one case as in the other, and what more does the painter need for his canvas?

The difficulty must be this. Although both themes, as representing visible objects, are equally adapted to painting, there is this essential difference between them: one is a visible progressive action, the various parts of which follow one another in time; the other is a visible stationary action, the development of whose various parts takes place in space. Since painting, because its signs or means of imitation can be combined only in space, must relinquish all representations of time, therefore progressive actions, as such, cannot come within its range. It must content itself with actions in space; in other words, with mere bodies, whose attitude lets us infer their action. Poetry, on the contrary –

XVI

But I will try to prove my conclusions by starting from first principles.

I argue thus. If it be true that painting employs wholly different signs or means of imitation from poetry, – the one using forms and colors in space, the other articulate sounds in time, – and if signs must unquestionably stand in convenient relation with the thing signified, then signs arranged side by side can represent only objects existing side by side, or whose parts so exist, while consecutive signs can express only objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other, in time.

Objects which exist side by side, or whose parts so exist, are called bodies. Consequently bodies with their visible properties are the peculiar subjects of painting.

Objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other in time, are actions. Consequently actions are the peculiar subjects of poetry.

All bodies, however, exist not only in space, but also in time. They continue, and, at any moment of their continuance, may assume a different appearance and stand in different relations. Every one of these momentary appearances and groupings was the result of a preceding, may become the cause of a following, and is therefore the centre of a present, action. Consequently painting can imitate actions also, but only as they are suggested through forms.

Actions, on the other hand, cannot exist independently, but must always be joined to certain agents. In so far as those agents are bodies or are

regarded as such, poetry describes also bodies, but only indirectly through actions.

Painting, in its coexistent compositions, can use but a single moment of an action, and must therefore choose the most pregnant one, the one most suggestive of what has gone before and what is to follow.

Poetry, in its progressive imitations, can use but a single attribute of bodies, and must choose that one which gives the most vivid picture of the body as exercised in this particular action.

Hence the rule for the employment of a single descriptive epithet, and the cause of the rare occurrence of descriptions of physical objects.

I should place less confidence in this dry chain of conclusions, did I not find them fully confirmed by Homer, or, rather, had they not been first suggested to me by Homer's method. These principles alone furnish a key to the noble style of the Greek, and enable us to pass just judgment on the opposite method of many modern poets who insist upon emulating the artist in a point where they must of necessity remain inferior to him.

I find that Homer paints nothing but progressive actions. All bodies, all separate objects, are painted only as they take part in such actions, and generally with a single touch. No wonder, then, that artists find in Homer's pictures little or nothing to their purpose, and that their only harvest is where the narration brings together in a space favorable to art a number of beautiful shapes in graceful attitudes, however little the poet himself may have painted shapes, attitudes, or space. If we study one by one the whole series of pictures proposed by Caylus, we shall in every case find proof of the justness of these conclusions. [. . .]

XVII

But, it may be urged, the signs employed in poetry not only follow each other, but are also arbitrary; and, as arbitrary signs, they are certainly capable of expressing things as they exist in space. Homer himself furnishes examples of this. We have but to call to mind his shield of Achilles to have an instance of how circumstantially and yet poetically a single object can be described according to its coexistent parts.

I will proceed to answer this double objection. I call it double, because a just conclusion must

hold, though unsupported by examples, and on the other hand the example of Homer has great weight with me, even when I am unable to justify it by rules.

It is true that since the signs of speech are arbitrary, the parts of a body can by their means be made to follow each other as readily as in nature they exist side by side. But this is a property of the signs of language in general, not of those peculiar to poetry. The prose writer is satisfied with being intelligible, and making his representations plain and clear. But this is not enough for the poet. He desires to present us with images so vivid, that we fancy we have the things themselves before us, and cease for the moment to be conscious of his words, the instruments with which he effects his purpose. That was the point made in the definition given above of a poetical picture. But the poet must always paint; and now let us see in how far bodies, considered in relation to their parts lying together in space, are fit subjects for this painting.

How do we obtain a clear idea of a thing in space? First we observe its separate parts, then the union of these parts, and finally the whole. Our senses perform these various operations with such amazing rapidity as to make them seem but one. This rapidity is absolutely essential to our obtaining an idea of the whole, which is nothing more than the result of the conception of the parts and of their connection with each other. Suppose now that the poet should lead us in proper order from one part of the object to the other; suppose he should succeed in making the connection of these parts perfectly clear to us; how much time will he have consumed?

The details, which the eye takes in at a glance, he enumerates slowly one by one, and it often happens that, by the time he has brought us to the last, we have forgotten the first. Yet from these details we are to form a picture. When we look at an object the various parts are always present to the eye. It can run over them again and again. The ear, however, loses the details it has heard, unless memory retain them. And if they be so retained, what pains and effort it costs to recall their impressions in the proper order and with even the moderate degree of rapidity necessary to the obtaining of a tolerable idea of the whole. [. . .]

Once more, then, I do not deny that language has the power of describing a corporeal whole

according to its parts. It certainly has, because its signs, although consecutive, are nevertheless arbitrary. But I deny that this power exists in language as the instrument of poetry. For illusion, which is the special aim of poetry, is not produced by these verbal descriptions of objects, nor can it ever be so produced. The coexistence of the body comes into collision with the sequence of the words, and although while the former is getting resolved into the latter, the dismemberment of the whole into its parts is a help to us, yet the reunion of these parts into a whole is made extremely difficult, and not infrequently impossible. [. . .]

XVIII

And shall Homer nevertheless have fallen into those barren descriptions of material objects?

Let us hope that only a few such passages can be cited. And even those few, I venture to assert, will be found really to confirm the rule, to which they appear to form an exception.

The rule is this, that succession in time is the province of the poet, coexistence in space that of the artist.

To bring together into one and the same picture two points of time necessarily remote, as Mazzuoli does the rape of the Sabine women and the reconciliation effected by them between their husbands and relations; or as Titian does, representing in one piece the whole story of the Prodigal Son, – his dissolute life, his misery, and repentance, – is an encroachment of the painter on the domain of the poet, which good taste can never sanction.

To try to present a complete picture to the reader by enumerating in succession several parts or things which in nature the eye necessarily takes in at a glance, is an encroachment of the poet on the domain of the painter, involving a great effort of the imagination to very little purpose.

Painting and poetry should be like two just and friendly neighbors, neither of whom indeed is allowed to take unseemly liberties in the heart of the other's domain, but who exercise mutual forbearance on the borders, and effect a peaceful settlement for all the petty encroachments which circumstances may compel either to make in haste on the rights of the other. [. . .]

XX

To return, then, to my road, if a saunterer can be said to have a road.

What I have been saying of bodily objects in general applies with even more force to those which are beautiful.

Physical beauty results from the harmonious action of various parts which can be taken in at a glance. It therefore requires that these parts should lie near together; and, since things whose parts lie near together are the proper subjects of painting, this art and this alone can imitate physical beauty.

The poet, who must necessarily detail in succession the elements of beauty, should therefore desist entirely from the description of physical beauty as such. He must feel that these elements arranged in a series cannot possibly produce the same effect as in juxtaposition; that the concentrating glance which we try to cast back over them immediately after their enumeration, gives us no harmonious picture; and that to conceive the effect of certain eyes, a certain mouth and nose taken together, unless we can recall a similar combination of such parts in nature or art, surpasses the power of human imagination. [...]

XXI

But are we not robbing poetry of too much by taking from her all pictures of physical beauty?

Who seeks to take them from her? We are only warning her against trying to arrive at them by a particular road, where she will blindly grope her way in the footsteps of a sister art without ever reaching the goal. We are not closing against her other roads whereon art can follow only with her eyes.

Homer himself, who so persistently refrains from all detailed descriptions of physical beauty, that we barely learn, from a passing mention, that Helen had white arms³ and beautiful hair,⁴ even he manages nevertheless to give us an idea of her

beauty, which far surpasses any thing that art could do. Recall the passage where Helen enters the assembly of the Trojan elders. The venerable men see her coming, and one says to the others: –

Small blame is theirs if both the Trojan
knights

And brazen-mailed Achaians have endured
So long so many evils for the sake
Of that one woman. She is wholly like
In feature to the deathless goddesses.⁵

What can give a more vivid idea of her beauty than that cold-blooded age should deem it well worth the war which had cost so much blood and so many tears?

What Homer could not describe in its details, he shows us by its effect. Paint us, ye poets, the delight, the attraction, the love, the enchantment of beauty, and you have painted beauty itself. [...]

Yet another way in which poetry surpasses art in the description of physical beauty, is by turning beauty into charm. Charm is beauty in motion, and therefore less adapted to the painter than the poet. The painter can suggest motion, but his figures are really destitute of it.

Charm therefore in a picture becomes grimace, while in poetry it remains what it is, a transitory beauty, which we would fain see repeated. It comes and goes, and since we can recall a motion more vividly and easily than mere forms and colors, charm must affect us more strongly than beauty under the same conditions. [...] Here we have, therefore, a fresh illustration of what was urged above, that the poet, even when speaking of a painting or statue, is not bound to confine his description within the limits of art.

Translator's Notes

- 1 *Iliad* i.44–53.
- 2 *Iliad* iv.1–4.
- 3 *Iliad* iii.121.
- 4 *Ibid.* 319.
- 5 *Ibid.* 156–8.

Critique of the Power of Judgment

Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who lived his entire life in the Prussian town of Königsberg, is a pre-eminent figure in the history of philosophy, having made groundbreaking contributions in virtually every area of the subject.

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First Section
Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of
Judgment
First Book
Analytic of the Beautiful¹

First Moment
Of the Judgment of Taste, Concerning
its Quality

§ 1
The Judgment of Taste is Aesthetic

In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of

Immanuel Kant, from *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 89–104, 107–116, 120–126, 128–131, 168–176, 178–180, 182–195, 203–207, 225–228, 365–389. Reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press.

pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground **can-not** be **other than subjective**. Any relation of representations, however, even that of sensations, can be objective (in which case it signifies what is real in an empirical representation); but not the relation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation.²

To grasp a regular, purposive structure with one's faculty of cognition (whether the manner of representation be distinct or confused) is something entirely different from being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life,³ under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging^a that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the

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^a*Unterscheidungs- und Beurtheilungsvermögen.*

mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state. Given representations in a judgment can be empirical (hence aesthetic); however, the judgment that is made by means of them is logical if in the judgment they are related to the object. Conversely, however, even if the given representations were to be rational but related in a judgment solely to the subject (its feeling), then they are to that extent always aesthetic.

§ 2

The Satisfaction that Determines the Judgment of Taste is Without any Interest

The satisfaction that we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is called interest. Hence such a satisfaction always has at the same time a relation to the faculty of desire, either as its determining ground or else as necessarily interconnected with its determining ground. But if the question is whether something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether there is anything that is or that could be at stake, for us or for someone else, in the existence of the thing, but rather how we judge^a it in mere contemplation (intuition or reflection).⁴ If someone asks^b me whether I find the palace that I see before me beautiful, I may well say that I don't like that sort of thing, which is made merely to be gaped at, or, like the Iroquois sachem, that nothing in Paris pleased him better than the cook-shops;⁵ in true **Rousseauesque** style I might even vilify the vanity of the great who waste the sweat of the people on such superfluous things;⁶ finally I could even easily convince myself that if I were to find myself on an uninhabited island, without any hope of ever coming upon human beings again, and could conjure up such a magnificent structure through my mere wish, I would not even take the trouble of doing so if I already had a hut that was^c comfortable enough for me. All of this might be conceded to me and approved; but that is not what is at issue here. One only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me, however indifferent I might be with regard to the existence of the object of this

representation. It is readily seen that to say that it is **beautiful** and to prove that I have taste what matters is what I make of this representation in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object. Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. One must not be in the least biased in favor of the existence of the thing, but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in matters of taste.

We can find no better way of elucidating this proposition, however, which is of the utmost importance, than by contrasting to the pure disinterested⁷ satisfaction in the judgment of taste that which is combined with interest, especially if we can be certain that there are not more kinds of interest than those that are to be mentioned now.

§ 3

The Satisfaction in the Agreeable is Combined with Interest

The agreeable is that which pleases the senses in sensation.⁷ Now here there is an immediate opportunity to reprove and draw attention to a quite common confusion of the double meaning that the word "sensation" can have. All satisfaction (it is said or thought) is itself sensation (of a pleasure). Hence everything that pleases, just because it pleases, is agreeable (and, according to its different degrees or relations to other agreeable sensations, **graceful, lovely, enchanting, enjoyable**, etc.). But if this is conceded, then impressions of the senses, which determine inclination, or principles of reason, which determine the will, or merely reflected forms of intuition, which determine the power of judgment, are all entirely the same as far as the effect on the feeling of pleasure is concerned. For this would be the agreeableness in the sensation of one's state, and, since in the end all the effort of our faculties is

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^a*beurtheilen*.

^bIn the first edition, "were to ask ...".

^cIn the first edition, "is."

⁷A judgment on an object of satisfaction can be entirely **disinterested** yet still very **interesting**, i.e., it is not grounded on any interest but it produces an interest; all pure moral judgments are like this. But the pure judgment of taste does not in itself even ground any interest. Only in society does it become interesting to have taste, the reason for which will be indicated in the sequel.

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directed to what is practical and must be united in it as their goal, one could not expect of them any other assessment of things and their value than that which consists in the gratification that they promise. In the end, how they achieve this does not matter at all, and since^a the choice of means alone can make a difference here, people could certainly blame one another for foolishness and incomprehension, but never for baseness and malice: for all of them, each seeing things his own way, would be after one goal, which for everyone is gratification.

If a determination of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is called sensation, then this expression means something entirely different than if I call the representation of a thing (through sense, as a receptivity belonging to the faculty of^b cognition) sensation. For in the latter case the representation is related to the object, but in the first case it is related solely to the subject, and does not serve for any cognition at all, not even that by which the subject **cognizes** itself.

In the above explanation, however, we understand by the word “sensation” an objective representation of the senses; and in order not always to run the risk of being misinterpreted, we will call that which must always remain merely subjective and absolutely cannot constitute a representation of an object by the otherwise customary name of “feeling.” The green color of the meadows belongs to **objective** sensation, as perception of an object of sense; but its agreeableness belongs to **subjective** sensation, through which no object is represented, i.e., to feeling, through which the object is considered as an object of satisfaction (which is not a cognition of it).

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Now that my judgment about an object by which I declare it agreeable expresses an interest in it is already clear from the fact that through sensation it excites a desire for objects of the same sort, hence the satisfaction presupposes not the mere judgment about it but the relation of its existence to my state insofar as it is affected by such an object. Hence one says of the agreeable not merely that it **pleases** but that it **gratifies**. It is not mere approval that I give it, rather inclination is thereby aroused; and any judgment about the constitution of the object belongs so little to that

which is agreeable in the liveliest way that those who are always intent only on enjoyment (for this is the word that signifies intensity of gratification) gladly put themselves above all judging.

§ 4

The Satisfaction in the Good is Combined with Interest

That is **good** which pleases by means of reason alone, through the mere concept. We call something **good for something** (the useful) that pleases only as a means; however, another thing is called **good in itself** that pleases for itself. Both always involve the concept of an end, hence the relation of reason to (at least possible) willing, and consequently a satisfaction in the **existence** of an object or of an action, i.e., some sort of interest.⁸

In order to find something good, I must always know what sort of thing the object is supposed to be, i.e., I must have a concept of it. I do not need that in order to find beauty in something. Flowers, free designs, lines aimlessly^c intertwined in each other under the name of foliage, signify nothing, do not depend on any determinate concept, and yet please. The satisfaction in the beautiful must depend upon reflection on an object that leads to some sort of concept (it is indeterminate which), and is thereby also distinguished from the agreeable, which rests entirely on sensation.

In many cases, to be sure, the agreeable seems to be identical to the good. Thus it is commonly said that all gratification (especially if it is durable) is good in itself, which means roughly that to be durably agreeable is the same as to be good. But one can quickly see that this is merely an erroneous verbal confusion, since the concepts that are properly attached to these expressions can in no way be exchanged for each other. The agreeable, which as such represents the object solely in relation to sense, must first be brought under principles of reason through the concept of an end before it can be called good as an object of the will. But that there is an entirely different relation to satisfaction when I call something that gratifies at the same time **good** can be seen from the fact that in the case of the good there is always

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^aThe first edition inserts the word “only” here.

^bThe word *Vermögen* (faculty of) was added in the second edition.

^c*ohne Absicht*.

the question whether it is merely mediately good or immediately good (whether it is useful or good in itself), while in contrast this cannot be a question at all in the case of the agreeable, since the word always signifies something that pleases immediately. (This is exactly the same in the case of that which I call beautiful.)

[. . .]

§ 5

Comparison of the Three Specifically Different Kinds of Satisfaction⁹

The agreeable and the good both have a relation to the faculty of desire, and to this extent bring satisfaction with them, the former a pathologically conditioned satisfaction (through stimuli, *stimulos*), the latter a pure practical satisfaction, which is determined not merely through the representation of the object but at the same time through the represented connection of the subject with the existence of the object. Not merely the object but also its existence please.^a Hence the judgment of taste is merely **contemplative**, i.e., a judgment that, indifferent with regard to the existence of an object, merely connects its constitution together with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. But this contemplation itself is also not directed to concepts; for the judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment (neither a theoretical nor a practical one),^b and hence it is neither **grounded** on concepts nor **aimed** at them.

5: 210 The agreeable, the beautiful, and the good therefore designate three different relations of representations to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, in relation to which we distinguish objects or kinds of representations from each other.¹⁰ The expressions appropriate to each of these, by means of which one designates the pleasure^c in each of them, are also not the same. **Agreeable** is that which everyone calls what gratifies him; **beautiful**, what merely **pleases** him; **good**, what is **esteemed, approved**,^d i.e., that on

which he sets an objective value.¹¹ Agreeableness is also valid for nonrational animals; beauty is valid only for human beings, i.e., animal but also rational beings,^e but not merely as the latter (e.g., spirits), rather as beings who are at the same time animal; the good, however, is valid for every rational being in general;¹² a proposition, which can receive its complete justification and explanation only in the sequel. One can say that among all these three kinds of satisfaction only that of the taste for the beautiful is a disinterested and free satisfaction; for no^f interest, neither that of the senses nor that of reason, extorts approval. Hence it could be said of satisfaction that it is related in the three cases mentioned to **inclination**, to **favor**, or to **respect**. For **favor** is the only free satisfaction. An object of inclination and one that is imposed upon us by a law of reason for the sake of desire leave us no freedom to make anything into an object of pleasure ourselves. All interest presupposes a need or produces one; and as a determining ground of approval it no longer leaves the judgment on the object free.

Concerning the interest of inclination in the case of the agreeable, everyone says that hunger is the best cook, and people with a healthy appetite relish everything that is edible at all; thus such a satisfaction demonstrates no choice in accordance with taste. Only when the need is satisfied can one distinguish who among the many has taste or does not. Likewise, there are mores^g (conduct)^h without virtue, politeness without benevolence, propriety without honorableness, etc. For where the moralⁱ law speaks there is, objectively,^j no longer any free choice with regard to what is to be done; and to show taste in one's conduct (or in judging^k that of others) is something very different from expressing one's moral^l mode of thinking; for the

^aThe words from here to the next semicolon were added in the second edition.

^fIn the second edition, "no" (*kein*) replaces "an" (*ein*).

^g*Sitten*. In this paragraph, Kant contrasts mere mores or manners (*Sitten*) with genuine morality (*moralische Denkungsart*), but uses the adjective *sittlich* ambiguously, meaning both genuinely moral but also merely modish.

^h*Conduite*.

ⁱ*sittliche*.

^jThe word "objectively" is added in the second edition.

^k*in Beurtheilung*; "in" added in the second edition.

^l*moralische*.

^aThis sentence was added in the second edition.

^bThe words in parentheses were added in the second edition.

^c*Complacenz*, i.e., Latin *complacentia*, which Kant often gives as an equivalent of *Lust*.

^dThis word (*gebilligt*) added in the second edition.

latter contains a command and produces a need, while modish^a taste by contrast only plays with the objects of satisfaction without attaching itself to any of them.

5: 211 **Definition of the Beautiful Derived from the First Moment**

Taste is the faculty for judging^b an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction **without any interest**. The object of such a satisfaction is called **beautiful**.¹³

Second Moment Of the Judgment of Taste, Concerning its Quality

§ 6

The Beautiful is that which, Without Concepts, is Represented as the Object of a Universal Satisfaction¹⁴

This definition of the beautiful can be deduced from the previous explanation of it as an object of satisfaction without any interest. For one cannot judge^c that about which he is aware that the satisfaction in it is without any interest in his own case in any way except that it must contain a ground of satisfaction for everyone. For since it is not grounded in any inclination of the subject (nor in any other underlying interest), but rather the person making the judgment feels himself completely **free** with regard to the satisfaction that he devotes to the object, he cannot discover as grounds of the satisfaction any private conditions, pertaining to his subject alone, and must therefore regard it as grounded in those that he can also presuppose in everyone else; consequently he must believe himself to have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure of everyone. Hence he will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a property^d of the object and the judgment logical (constituting a cogni-

tion of the object through concepts of it), although it is only aesthetic and contains merely a relation of the representation of the object to the subject, because it still has the similarity with logical judgment that its validity for everyone can be presupposed. But this universality cannot originate from concepts. For there is no transition from concepts to the feeling of pleasure or^e displeasure (except in pure practical laws, which however bring with them an interest of the sort that is not combined with the pure judgment of taste). Consequently there must be attached to the judgment of taste, with the consciousness of an abstraction in it from all interest, a claim to validity for everyone without the universality that pertains to objects, i.e., it must be combined with a claim to subjective universality.

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§ 7

Comparison of the Beautiful with the Agreeable and the Good Through the Above Characteristic

With regard to the **agreeable**, everyone is content that his judgment, which he grounds on a private feeling, and in which he says of an object that it pleases him, be restricted merely to his own person.¹⁵ Hence he is perfectly happy if, when he says that sparkling wine from the Canaries is agreeable, someone else should improve his expression and remind him that he should say "It is agreeable **to me**"; and this is so not only in the case of the taste of the tongue, palate, and throat, but also in the case of that which may be agreeable to someone's eyes and ears. For one person, the color violet is gentle and lovely, for another dead and lifeless. One person loves the tone of wind instruments, another that of stringed instruments. It would be folly to dispute the judgment of another that is different from our own in such a matter, with the aim of condemning it as incorrect, as if it were logically opposed to our own; thus^f with regard

^asittliche.

^bBeurtheilungsvermögen.

^cbeurtheilen.

^dBeschaffenheit.

^eIn the first edition, "and."

^fThe word "thus" in the second edition replaces "and" in the first.

to the agreeable, the principle **Everyone has his own^a** taste (of the senses) is valid.

With the beautiful it is entirely different. It would be ridiculous if (the precise converse) someone who prided himself on his taste thought to justify himself thus: "This object (the building we are looking at, the clothing someone is wearing, the poem that is presented for judging)^b is beautiful **for me**." For he must not call it **beautiful** if it pleases merely him. Many things may have charm and agreeableness for him, no one will be bothered about that; but if he pronounces that something is beautiful, then he expects the very same satisfaction of others: he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Hence he says that the **thing^c** is beautiful, and does not count on the agreement of others with his judgment of satisfaction because he has frequently found them to be agreeable with his own, but rather **demands** it from them. He rebukes them if they judge otherwise, and denies that they have taste, though he nevertheless requires that they ought to have it; and to this extent one cannot say, "Everyone has his special taste." This would be as much as to say that there is no taste at all, i.e., no aesthetic judgment that could make a rightful claim to the assent of everyone.

Nevertheless, one also finds with regard to the agreeable that unanimity in their judging^d of it may be encountered among people, in view of which taste is denied of some of them but conceded to others, and not indeed with the meaning of an organic sense, but as a faculty for judging^e with regard to the agreeable in general. Thus one says of someone who knows how to entertain his guests with agreeable things (of enjoyment through all the senses), so that they are all pleased, that he has taste. But here the universality is understood only comparatively, and in this case there are only **general^f** rules

(like all empirical rules are),^g not **universal^h** ones, the latter of which the judgment of taste about the beautiful ventures or claims. It is a judgment in relation to sociability insofar as it rests on empirical rules. With regard to the good, to be sure, judgments also rightly lay claim to validity for everyone; but the good is represented as an object of a universal satisfaction only **through a concept**, which is not the case either with the agreeable or with the beautiful.

§ 8

The Universality of the Satisfaction is Represented in a Judgment of Taste only as Subjective

This particular determination of the universality of an aesthetic judgment that can be found in a judgment of taste is something remarkable, not indeed for the logician, but certainly for the transcendental philosopher, the discovery of the origin of which calls for no little effort on his part, but which also reveals a property of our faculty of cognition that without this analysis would have remained unknown.

First, one must be fully convinced that through the judgment of taste (on the beautiful) one ascribes the satisfaction in an object **to everyone**, yet without grounding it on a concept (for then it would be the good), and that this claim to universal validity so essentially belongs to a judgment by which we declare something to be **beautiful** that without thinking this it would never occur to anyone to use this expression, rather everything that pleases without a concept would be counted as agreeable, regarding which everyone can be of his own mind, and no one expects assent to his judgment of taste of anyone else, although this is always the case in judgments of taste about beauty. I can call the first the taste of the senses, the second the taste of reflection,¹⁶ insofar as the first makes merely private judgments about an object, while the second

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^aThe word "own" (*eigenen*) in the second edition replaces the word "special" or "particular" (*besondern*) in the first.

^b*Beurtheilung*.

^c*Sache*.

^d*Beurtheilung*.

^e*Beurtheilungsvermögen*.

^f*generale*.

^gThe words in parentheses were added in the second edition.

^h*universale*.

makes supposedly generally valid (public) judgments, but both make aesthetic (not merely practical judgments) about an object, regarding merely^a the relation of its representation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Now it is nevertheless strange that in the case of the taste of the senses experience not only shows that its judgment (of pleasure or displeasure in something) is not universally valid, but also that everyone is intrinsically so modest as not even to ascribe this assent to others (even though a quite extensive unanimity is often found in these judgments as well), whereas the taste of reflection, which, as experience teaches, is often enough rejected in its claim to the universal validity of its judgment (about the beautiful), can nevertheless find it possible (as it also actually does) to represent judgments that could demand such assent universally, and does in fact expect it of everyone for each of its judgments, while those who make those judgments do not find themselves in conflict over the possibility of such a claim, but only find it impossible to agree on the correct application of this faculty in particular cases.

Here it should first of all be noted that a universality that does not rest on concepts of objects (even if only empirical ones) is not logical at all, but aesthetic, i.e., it does not contain an objective quantity of judgment, but only a subjective one, for which I also use the expression **common validity**,^b which does not designate^c the validity for every subject of the relation of a representation to the faculty of cognition but rather to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. (The same expression can, however, also be used for the logical quantity of the judgment provided only that one adds to it **objective** universal validity to distinguish it from the merely subjective, which is always aesthetic.)¹⁷

Now an **objectively universally valid** judgment is also always subjectively so, i.e., if the judgment is valid for everything that is contained under a given concept then it is also valid for everyone who represents an object

through this concept. But from a **subjectively universal validity**, i.e., from aesthetic universal validity, which does not rest on any concept, there cannot be any inference at all to logical universal validity; because the first kind of judgment does not pertain to the object at all. For that very reason, however, the aesthetic universality that is ascribed to a judgment must also be of a special kind, since the predicate of beauty is not connected with the concept of the **object** considered in its entire logical^d sphere, and yet it extends it over the whole sphere of **those who judge**.

In regard to logical quantity all judgments of taste are **singular** judgments. For since I must immediately hold the object up to my feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and yet not through concepts, it cannot have the quantity of an objectively generally valid judgment, although if the singular representation of the object of the judgment of taste in accordance with the conditions that determine the latter is transformed into a concept through comparison, then a logically universal judgment can arise from it: e.g., by means of a judgment of taste I declare the rose that I am gazing at to be beautiful. By contrast, the judgment that arises from the comparison of many singular ones, that roses in general are beautiful, is no longer pronounced merely as an aesthetic judgment, but as an aesthetically grounded logical judgment. Now the judgment that the rose is (in its use)^e agreeable is also, to be sure, an aesthetic and singular judgment, but not a judgment of taste, rather a judgment of the senses. That is to say, it differs from the former in that the judgment of taste carries with it an **aesthetic quantity** of universality, i.e., validity for everyone, which cannot be found in the judgment about the agreeable. Only judgments about the good alone, although they also determine the satisfaction in an object, have logical and not merely aesthetic validity, for they are valid of the object, as cognitions of it, and are therefore valid for everyone.

If one judges^f objects merely in accordance with concepts, then all representation of beauty is

^aAdded in the second edition.

^b*Gemeingültigkeit*.

^cThe word "designate" (*bezeichnet*) was added in the second edition.

^dThe word "logical" was added in the second edition.

^e*im Gebrauche*; in the Academy edition, Windelband suggests *im Geruche* (in its smell).

^f*beurtheilt*.

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lost. Thus there can also be no rule in accordance with which someone could be compelled to acknowledge something as beautiful. Whether a garment, a house, a flower is beautiful: no one allows himself to be talked into^a his judgment about that by means of any grounds or fundamental principles. One wants to submit the object to his own eyes, just as if his satisfaction depended on sensation; and yet, if one then calls the object beautiful, one believes oneself to have a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone, whereas any private sensation would be decisive only for him alone and his satisfaction.¹⁸

Now here it can be seen that in the judgment of taste nothing is postulated except such a **universal voice** with regard to satisfaction without the mediation of concepts, hence the **possibility** of an aesthetic judgment that could at the same time be considered valid for everyone. The judgment of taste does not itself **postulate** the accord of everyone (only a logically universal judgment can do that, since it can adduce grounds); it only **ascribes** this agreement to everyone, as a case of the rule with regard to which it expects confirmation not from concepts but only from the consent of others.¹⁹ The universal voice is thus only an idea (what it rests on will not yet be investigated here). Whether someone who believes himself to be making a judgment of taste is in fact judging in accordance with this idea can be uncertain; but that he relates it to that idea, thus that it is supposed to be a judgment of taste, he announces through the expression of beauty. Of that he can be certain for himself through the mere consciousness of separation of everything that belongs to the agreeable and the good from the satisfaction that remains to him; and this is all for which he promises himself the assent of everyone: a claim which he would also be justified in making under these conditions, if only he were not often to offend against them and thereby make an erroneous judgment of taste.^b

^a*beschwätzen*; the first edition has *abschwätzen* (talked out of).

^bIn the first edition, this clause was in the past indicative and not in the subjunctive mood.

§ 9

Investigation of the Question: Whether in the Judgment of Taste the Feeling of Pleasure Precedes the Judging^c of the Object or the Latter Precedes the Former

The solution of this problem is the key to the critique of taste, and hence worthy of full attention.

If the pleasure in the given object came first, and only its universal communicability^d were to be attributed in the judgment of taste to the representation of the object, then such a procedure would be self-contradictory. For such a pleasure would be none other than mere agreeableness in sensation,^e and hence by its very nature could have only private validity, since it would immediately depend on the representation through which the object is **given**.

Thus it is the universal capacity for the communication^f of the state of mind in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgment of taste, must serve as its ground and have the pleasure in the object as a consequence.²⁰ Nothing, however, can be universally communicated except cognition and representation so far as it belongs to cognition. For only so far is the latter objective, and only thereby does it have a universal point of relation with which everyone's faculty of representation is compelled to agree. Now if the determining ground of the judgment on this universal communicability of the representation is to be conceived of merely subjectively, namely without a concept of the object, it can be nothing other than the state of mind that is encountered in the relation of the powers of representation to each other insofar as they relate a given representation to **cognition in general**.

The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition.²¹ Thus the state of mind in this representation must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in

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^c*Beurtheilung*.

^d*Mittheilbarkeit*.

^e*Sinnenempfindung*.

^f*Mittheilungsfähigkeit*.

general. Now there belongs to a representation by which an object is given, in order for there to be cognition of it in general, **imagination** for the composition of the manifold of intuition and **understanding** for the unity of the concept that unifies the representations.^a This state of a **free play** of the faculties of cognition with a representation through which an object is given must be able to be universally communicated, because cognition, as a determination of the object with which given representations (in whatever subject it may be) should agree, is the only kind of representation that is valid for everyone.²²

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The subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a **cognition in general**): for we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable, just as any determinate cognition is, which still always rests on that relation as its subjective condition.

Now this merely subjective (aesthetic) judging^b of the object, or of the representation through which the object is given, precedes the pleasure in it, and is the ground of this pleasure in the harmony of the faculties of cognition; but on that universality of the subjective conditions of the judging^c of objects alone is this universal subjective validity of satisfaction, which we combine with the representation of the object that we call beautiful, grounded.

That being able to communicate one's state of mind, even if only with regard to the faculties of cognition, carries a pleasure with it, could easily be established (empirically and psychologically) from the natural tendency of human beings to sociability. But that is not enough for our purposes. When we call something beautiful, the pleasure that we feel is expected of everyone else

in the judgment of taste as necessary, just as if it were to be regarded as a property of the object that is determined in it in accordance with concepts; but beauty is nothing by itself, without relation to the feeling of the subject. However, we must reserve the discussion of this question until we have answered another: how and whether aesthetic judgments *a priori* are possible.

For now we shall still concern ourselves with the lesser question: in what way do we become conscious of a mutual subjective correspondence of the powers of cognition with each other^d in the judgment of taste – aesthetically, through mere inner sense and sensation, or intellectually, through the consciousness of our intentional activity through which we set them in play?^e

If the given representation, which occasions the judgment of taste, were a concept, which united understanding and imagination in the judging^f of the object into a cognition of the object, then the consciousness of this relationship would be intellectual (as in the objective schematism of the power of judgment, which was dealt with in the critique).²³ But in that case the judgment would not be made in relation to pleasure and displeasure, hence it would not be a judgment of taste. Now the judgment of taste, however, determines the object, independently of concepts, with regard to satisfaction and the predicate of beauty. Thus that subjective unity of the relation can make itself known only through sensation. The animation^{g,24} of both faculties (the imagination and the understanding)^h to an activity that is indeterminate but yet, through the stimulus of the given representation, in unison,ⁱ namely that which belongs to a cognition in general, is the sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgment of taste. Of course, an objective relation can only be thought, but insofar^j as it is subjective as far as its conditions are concerned it can still be sensed in its

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^aIn the first edition, this clause ends with a comma, and the next sentence is a further clause of the present one, introduced with an "and."

^b*Beurtheilung*.

^c*Beurtheilung*.

^dThe words "with each other" (*untereinander*) were added in the second edition.

^eQuestion mark added.

^f*Beurtheilung*.

^g*Belebung*.

^hThe words in parentheses were added in the second edition.

ⁱ*einheitlicher*.

^jIn the first edition, "if."

effect on the mind; and further, in the case of a relation that is not grounded in any concept (like that of the powers of representation to a faculty of cognition in general), no other consciousness of it is possible except through sensation of the effect that consists in the facilitated play of both powers of the mind (imagination and understanding), enlivened^a through mutual agreement. A representation which, though singular and without comparison to others, nevertheless is in agreement with the conditions of universality, an agreement that constitutes the business of the understanding in general, brings the faculties of cognition into the well-proportioned disposition that we require for all cognition and hence also regard as valid for everyone (for^b every human being) who is determined to judge by means of understanding and sense in combination.

The Definition of the Beautiful Drawn from the Second Moment

That is **beautiful** which pleases universally without a concept.

[. . .]

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§ 13

The Pure Judgment of Taste is Independent from Charm and Emotion²⁵

Any interest spoils the judgment of taste and deprives it of its impartiality, especially if the purposiveness does not precede the feeling of pleasure, as in the interest of reason, but is instead grounded on it, which always happens in the aesthetic judgment about something insofar as it is gratifying or painful. Hence judgments that are so affected can make no claim at all to universal satisfaction or as little claim as can be made when those sorts of sensations are found among the determining grounds of taste. Taste is always still barbaric when it needs the addition of **charms** and **emotions** for satisfaction, let alone if it makes these into the standard for its approval.

And yet charms are not only often included with beauty (which should properly concern merely form) as a contribution to the aesthetic universal satisfaction, but are even passed off as beauties in themselves, hence the matter of satisfaction is passed off for the form: a misunderstanding which, like many others that yet always have something true as their ground, can be eliminated by careful determination of these concepts.

A judgment of taste on which charm and emotion have no influence (even though these may be combined with the satisfaction in the beautiful), which thus has for its determining ground merely the purposiveness of the form, is a **pure judgment of taste**.²⁶

§ 14

Elucidation by Means of Examples

Aesthetic judgments can be divided, just like theoretical (logical) ones, into empirical and pure. The first are those which assert agreeableness or disagreeableness, the second those which assert beauty of an object or the way of representing it; the former are judgments of sense (material aesthetic judgments), the latter (as formal)^c are alone proper judgments of taste.

A judgment of taste is thus pure only insofar as no merely empirical satisfaction is mixed into its determining ground. This always happens, however, if charm or emotion has any share in the judgment by which something is to be declared to be beautiful.

Now here there may arise many objections, pretending that charm is not merely a necessary ingredient of beauty, but even entirely sufficient by itself to be called beautiful. A mere color, e.g., the green of a lawn, a mere tone (in distinction from sound and noise), say that of a violin, is declared by most people to be beautiful in itself, although both seem to have as their ground merely the matter of the representations, namely mere sensation, and on that account deserve to be called only agreeable. Yet at the same time one will surely note that the sensations of color as well

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^a*belebten*.

^bThe word “for” added in the second edition.

^cThe parenthesis “(as formal)” was added in the second edition.

as of tone justifiably count as beautiful only insofar as both are pure, which is a determination that already concerns form, and is also the only thing that can be universally communicated about these representations with certainty: because the quality of the sensations themselves cannot be assumed to be in accord in all subjects, and it cannot easily be assumed that the agreeableness of one color in preference to another or of the tone of one musical instrument in preference to another will be judged^a in the same way by everyone.

[...]

As for the opinion that the beauty that is attributed to the object on account of its form may well be heightened by charm, this is a common error and one that is very detrimental to genuine, uncorrupted, well-grounded taste, although charms may certainly be added beside beauty in order to interest the mind through the representation of the object beyond dry satisfaction, and thus to serve to recommend taste and its cultivation,^b especially when it is still crude and unpracticed. But they actually do damage to the judgment of taste if they attract attention to themselves as grounds for the judging^c of beauty. For it is so far from being true that they contribute to taste that, if taste is still weak and unpracticed, they must rather be accepted cautiously, as foreigners, only to the extent that they do not disturb that beautiful form.²⁷

In painting and sculpture, indeed in all the pictorial arts,^d in architecture²⁸ and horticulture insofar as they are fine arts, the **drawing** is what is essential, in which what constitutes the ground of all arrangements for taste is not what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases through its form. The colors that illuminate the outline belong to charm; they can of course enliven^e the object in itself for sensation, but they cannot make it worthy of being intuited and beautiful, rather, they are often even considerably restricted by what is required by beautiful form, and even

where charm is permitted it is ennobled only through the former.^f

All form of the objects of the senses (of the outer as well as, mediately, the inner) is either **shape**^g or **play**: in the latter case, either play of shapes (in space, mime, and dance), or mere^h play of sensations (in time). The **charm** of colors or of the agreeable tones of instruments can be added, but **drawing** in the former and composition in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgment of taste; and that the purity of colors as well as of tones as well as their multiplicity and their contrast seem to contribute to beauty does not mean that they as it were supply a supplement of the same rank to the satisfaction in the form because they are agreeable by themselves, but rather they do so because they merely make the latter more precisely, more determinately, and more completely intuitable, and also enliven the representationⁱ through their charm, thereby awakening and sustaining^j attention to the object itself.

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Even what one calls **ornaments** (*parerga*),^k i.e., that which is not internal to the entire representation of the object as a constituent, but only belongs to it externally as an addendum and augments the satisfaction of taste, still does this only through its form: like the borders of paintings,^l draperies on statues, or colonnades around magnificent buildings. But if the ornament itself does not consist in beautiful form, if it is, like a gilt frame, attached merely in order to recommend approval for the painting through its charm – then it is called **decoration**, and detracts from genuine beauty.

Emotion, a sensation in which agreeableness is produced only by means of a momentary

^a*beurtheilt*.

^b*Kultur*.

^c*Beurtheilungsgründe*.

^d*bildenden Künste*.

^eFollowing the second edition, reading *belebt ... machen* rather than *beliebt* (make it beloved).

^fIn the first edition, Kant explicitly refers to “beautiful form” rather than merely “the former” here.

^g*Gestalt*.

^hThe word “mere” added in the second edition.

ⁱThe phrase “enliven the representation” added in the second edition; the first edition would read “and through their charm awaken and elevate ...”.

^jIn the first edition, “elevating” (*erheben* rather than *erhalten*).

^kThe parenthetical term *parerga*, a word in both Latin and Greek meaning something subordinate or incidental, is added in the second edition.

^lThis example was added in the second edition.

inhibition followed by a stronger outpouring of the vital force, does not belong to beauty at all. Sublimity (with which the feeling of emotion is combined), however, requires another standard for judging^a than that on which taste is grounded; and thus a pure judgment of taste has neither charm nor emotion, in a word no sensation, as matter of the aesthetic judgment, for its determining ground.

[. . .]

§ 16

The Judgment of Taste Through which an Object is Declared to be Beautiful under the Condition of a Determinate Concept is not Pure

There are two kinds of beauty: free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) or merely adherent^b beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). The first presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be; the second does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it. The first are called (self-subsisting) beauties of this or that thing; the latter, as adhering to a concept (conditioned beauty), are ascribed to objects that stand under the concept of a particular end.²⁹

Flowers are free natural beauties. Hardly anyone other than the botanist knows what sort of thing a flower is supposed to be; and even the botanist, who recognizes in it the reproductive organ of the plant, pays no attention to this natural end if he judges the flower by means of taste. Thus this judgment is not grounded on any kind of perfection, any internal purposiveness to which the composition of the manifold is related. Many birds (the parrot, the hummingbird, the bird of paradise) and a host of marine crustaceans are beauties in themselves, which are not attached to a determinate object in accordance with concepts regarding its end, but are free and please for themselves. Thus designs *à la grecque*,³⁰ foliage for borders or on wallpaper, etc., signify nothing by

themselves: they do not represent anything, no object under a determinate concept, and are free beauties. One can also count as belonging to the same kind what are called in music fantasias (without a theme), indeed all music without a text.

In the judging^c of a free beauty (according to mere form) the judgment of taste is pure. No concept of any end for which the manifold should serve the given object and thus which the latter should represent is presupposed, by which the imagination, which is as it were at play in the observation of the shape, would merely be restricted.

But the beauty of a human being (and in this species that of a man, a woman, or a child), the beauty of a horse, of a building (such as a church, a palace, an arsenal, or a garden-house) presuppose a concept of the end that determines what the thing should be, hence a concept of its perfection, and is thus merely adherent^d beauty. Now just as the combination of the agreeable (of sensation) with beauty, which properly concerns only form, hindered the purity of the judgment of taste, so the combination of the good (that is, the way in which the manifold is good for the thing itself, in accordance with its end) with beauty does damage to its purity.³¹

One would be able to add much to a building that would be pleasing in the intuition of it if only it were not supposed to be a church; a figure could be beautified with all sorts of curlicues and light but regular lines, as the New Zealanders^e do with their tattooing, if only it were not a human being; and the latter could have much finer features and a more pleasing, softer outline to its facial structure if only it were not supposed to represent a man, or even a warrior.

Now the satisfaction in the manifold in a thing in relation to the internal purpose that determines its possibility is a satisfaction grounded on a concept; the satisfaction in beauty, however, is one that presupposes no concept, but is immediately combined with the representation through which the object is given (not through which it is thought). Now if the judgment of taste in regard

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^a*Beurtheilung*.

^b*anhängende*; the Latin equivalent shows that Kant means the same by this as by the term *adhärierende*, which he uses later in this section.

^c*Beurtheilung*.

^d*adhärierende*.

^eThat is, the Maori aborigines in New Zealand.

to the latter is made dependent on the purpose in the former, as a judgment of reason, and is thereby restricted, then it is no longer a free and pure judgment of taste.

To be sure, taste gains by this combination of aesthetic satisfaction with the intellectual in that it becomes fixed and, though not universal, can have rules prescribed to it in regard to certain purposively determined objects. But in this case these are also not rules of taste, but merely rules for the unification of taste with reason, i.e., of the beautiful with the good, through which the former becomes usable as an instrument of the intention with regard to the latter, so that the determination of the mind that sustains itself and is of subjective universal validity can underlie that which can only be sustained through strenuous resolve but is objectively universally valid. Strictly speaking, however, perfection does not gain by beauty, nor does beauty gain by perfection; rather, since in comparing the representation by which an object is given to us with the object (with regard to what it ought to be) we cannot avoid at the same time holding it together with the subject, the **entire faculty** of the powers of representation gains if both states of mind are in agreement.

A judgment of taste in regard to an object with a determinate internal end would thus be pure only if the person making the judgment either had no concept of this end or abstracted from it in his judgment. But in that case, although this person would have made a correct judgment of taste, in that he would have judged^a the object as a free beauty, he would nevertheless be criticized and accused of a false taste by someone else, who considered beauty in the object only as an adherent property (who looked to the end of the object), even though both judge correctly in their way: the one on the basis of what he has before his sense, the other on the basis of what he has in his thoughts. By means of this distinction one can settle many disputes about beauty between judges of taste, by showing them that the one is concerned^b with free beauty, the other with adherent

beauty, the first making a pure, the second an applied judgment of taste.

[. . .]

Definition of the Beautiful Inferred from this Third Moment

Beauty is the form of the **purposiveness** of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it **without representation of an end**.^{*32}

Fourth Moment Of the Judgment of Taste, Concerning the Modality of the Satisfaction in the Object

§ 18

What the Modality of a Judgment of Taste Is

Of every representation I can say that it is at least **possible** that it (as a cognition) be combined with a pleasure. Of that which I call **agreeable** I say that it **actually** produces a pleasure in me. Of the **beautiful**, however, one thinks that it has a necessary relation to satisfaction. Now this necessity is of a special kind: not a theoretical objective necessity, where it can be cognized *a priori* that every one **will feel** this satisfaction in the object called

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^{*}It might be adduced as a counterexample to this definition that there are things in which one can see a purposive form without cognizing an end in them, e.g., the stone utensils often excavated from ancient burial mounds, which are equipped with a hole, as if for a handle, which, although they clearly betray by their shape a purposiveness the end of which one does not know, are nevertheless not declared to be beautiful on that account. Yet the fact that they are regarded as a work of art is already enough to require one to admit that one relates their shape to some sort of intention and to a determinate purpose. Hence there is also no immediate satisfaction at all in their intuition. A flower, by contrast,^d e.g., a tulip, is held to be beautiful because a certain purposiveness is encountered in our perception of it which, as we judge^e, it is not related to any end at all.

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^{*}The second edition here omits the word "also" from the first.

^dIn the first edition, "however."

^e*beurtheilen*.

^fThe second edition here omits the word "however" present in the first.

^a*beurtheilete*.

^bIn the second edition, the verb *halte* replaces *wende* (turning to), used in the first.

beautiful by me, nor a practical necessity, whereby means of concepts of a pure will, serving as rules for freely acting beings, this satisfaction is a necessary consequence of an objective law and signifies nothing other than that one absolutely (without a further aim) ought to act in a certain way. Rather, as a necessity that is thought in an aesthetic judgment, it can only be called **exemplary**, i.e., a^a necessity of the assent of **all** to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that one cannot produce.³³ Since an aesthetic judgment is not an objective and cognitive judgment, this necessity cannot be derived from determinate concepts, and is therefore not apodictic. Much less can it be inferred from the universality of experience (from a complete unanimity in judgments about the beauty of a certain object). For not only would experience hardly supply sufficient evidence of this, but it is also impossible to ground any concept of the necessity of these judgments on empirical judgments.³⁴

§ 19

The Subjective Necessity that we Ascribe to the Judgment of Taste is Conditioned

The judgment of taste ascribes assent to everyone, and whoever declares something to be beautiful wishes that everyone **should** approve of the object in question and similarly declare it to be beautiful. The **should** in aesthetic judgments of taste is thus pronounced only conditionally even given all the data that are required for the judging.^b One solicits assent from everyone else because one has a ground for it that is common to all; one could even count on this assent if only one were always sure that the case were correctly subsumed under that ground as the rule of approval.

§ 20

The Condition of the Necessity that is Alleged by a Judgment of Taste is the Idea of a Common Sense

If judgments of taste (like cognitive judgments) had a determinate objective principle, then someone who made them in accordance with the

latter would lay claim to the unconditioned necessity of his judgment. If they had no principle at all, like those of mere sensory taste, then one would never even have a thought of their necessity. They must thus have a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity. Such a principle, however, could only be regarded as a common sense, which is essentially different from the common understanding that is sometimes also called common sense (*sensus communis*),³⁵ since the latter judges not by feeling but always by concepts, although commonly only in the form of obscurely represented principles.

Thus only under the presupposition that there is a common sense (by which, however, we do not mean any external sense but rather the effect of the free play of our cognitive powers), only under the presupposition of such a common sense, I say, can the judgment of taste be made.

§ 21

Whether One has Good Reason to Presuppose a Common Sense

Cognitions and judgments must, together with the conviction that accompanies them, be able to be universally communicated, for otherwise they would have no correspondence with the object: they would all be a merely subjective play of the powers of representation, just as skepticism insists. But if cognitions are to be able to be communicated, then the mental state, i.e., the disposition of the cognitive powers for a cognition in general, and indeed that proportion which is suitable for making cognition out of a representation (whereby an object is given to us) must also be capable of being universally communicated; for without this, as the subjective condition of cognizing, the cognition, as an effect, could not arise. And this actually happens every time when, by means of the senses, a given object brings the imagination into activity for the synthesis^d of the manifold, while the imagination brings the understanding into activity for the unification of the manifold into

^aIn the first edition, "the."

^b*Beurtheilung*.

^cIn the first edition, "although commonly in accordance with the latter [concepts], as only obscurely represented principles."

^d*Zusammensetzung*.

5: 239 concepts. But this disposition of the cognitive powers has a different proportion depending on the difference of the objects that are given. Nevertheless, there must be one in which this inner relationship is optimal for the animation of both powers of the mind (the one through the other) with respect to cognition (of given objects) in general; and this disposition cannot be determined except through the feeling (not by concepts). Now since this disposition itself must be capable of being universally communicated, hence also the feeling of it (in the case of a given representation), but since the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense, the latter must be able to be assumed with good reason, and indeed without appeal to psychological observations, but rather as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition, which is^a assumed in every logic and every principle of cognitions that is not skeptical.

§ 22

The Necessity of the Universal Assent that is Thought in a Judgment of Taste is a Subjective Necessity, which is Represented as Objective under the Presupposition of a Common Sense

In all judgments by which we declare something to be beautiful, we allow no one to be of a different opinion, without, however, grounding our judgment on concepts, but only on our feeling, which we therefore make our ground not as a private feeling, but as a common one. Now this common sense cannot be grounded on experience for this purpose, for it is to justify judgments that contain a “should”: it does not say that everyone **will** concur with our judgment but that everyone **should** agree with it. Thus the common sense, of whose judgment I here^b offer my judgment of taste as an example and on account of which I ascribe **exemplary** validity to it, is a merely ideal norm, under the presupposition of which one could rightfully make a judgment that agrees with it and the satisfaction in an object

that is expressed in it into a rule for everyone: since the principle, though only subjective, is nevertheless assumed to be subjectively universal (an idea necessary for everyone), which, as far as the unanimity of different judges is concerned, could demand universal assent just like an objective one – if only one were certain of having correctly subsumed under it.

This indeterminate norm of a common sense is really presupposed by us: our presumption in making judgments of taste proves that.³⁶ Whether there is in fact such a common sense, as a constitutive principle of the possibility of experience, or whether a yet higher principle of reason only makes it into a regulative principle for us first to produce a common sense in ourselves for higher ends, thus whether taste is an original and natural faculty, or only the idea of one that is yet to be acquired and is artificial, so that a judgment of taste, with its expectation of a universal assent, is in fact only a demand of reason to produce such a unanimity in the manner of sensing, and whether the “should,” i.e., the objective necessity of the confluence of the feeling of everyone with that of each, signifies only the possibility of coming to agreement about this, and the judgment of taste only provides an example of the application of this principle – this we would not and cannot yet investigate here; for now we have only to resolve the faculty of taste into its elements and to unite them ultimately in the idea of a common sense.

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The Definition of the Beautiful Drawn from the Fourth Moment

That is **beautiful** which is cognized without a concept as the object of a **necessary** satisfaction.

* *
*

General Remark on the First Section of the Analytic

If one draws the conclusion from the above analyses, it turns out that everything flows from the concept of taste as a faculty for judging^c an

^aIn the first edition, “must be.”

^bFollowing the second edition in reading *hier* rather than *mir* (to myself).

^c*Beurtheilungsvermögen*.

object in relation to the **free lawfulness** of the imagination. But if in the judgment of taste the imagination must be considered in its freedom, then it is in the first instance taken not as reproductive, as subjected to the laws of association, but as productive and self-active (as the author-
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^awillkürlicher.

^bDichten.

lands purposiveness without a concept to be necessary for beauty.

No one is likely to think it necessary for a person to have taste in order to find more satisfaction in the shape of a circle than in a scribbled outline, or more in an equilateral and equiangular quadrilateral than in one that is lopsided and irregular, as it were deformed; for this takes only common understanding and no taste at all. Where there is an aim in view, e.g., judging^c the magnitude of an area or grasping the relation of the parts in a division to each other and to the whole, there regular shapes, and indeed those of the simplest kind, are necessary, and the satisfaction does not rest immediately on the view of the shape, but on its usefulness for all sorts of possible aims. A room whose walls form oblique angles, a garden of a similar sort, even any injury to symmetry in the shape of animals (e.g., having one eye) as well as in buildings or floral arrangements displeases, because it is contrapurposive, not only practically, with regard to a determinate use of these things, but also for judging^d with respect to all sorts of possible aims; this is not the case in the judgment of taste, which, if it is pure, immediately connects satisfaction or dissatisfaction to the mere **consideration** of the object without respect to use or to an end.

The regularity that leads to the concept of an object is of course the indispensable condition (*conditio sine qua non*) of grasping the object in a single representation and determining the manifold in its form. This determination is an end with regard to cognition; and in relation to this it is also always connected with satisfaction (which accompanies the accomplishment of any aim, even a merely problematic one). But then it is merely the approval of the solution that answers a problem, and not a free and indeterminately purposive entertainment of the mental powers with that which we call beautiful, where the understanding is in the service of the imagination and not vice versa.

In a thing that is possible only through an intention, in a building, even in an animal, the regularity that consists in symmetry must express the unity of the intuition, which accompanies the

^cbeurtheilen.

^dBeurtheilung.

concept of the end and belongs to the cognition. But where only a free play of the powers of representation (although under the condition that the understanding does not thereby suffer any offense) is to be maintained, in pleasure gardens, in the decoration of rooms, in all sorts of tasteful utensils and the like, regularity that comes across as constraint is to be avoided as far as possible; hence the English taste in gardens or the baroque taste in furniture pushes the freedom of the imagination almost to the point of the grotesque, and makes this abstraction from all constraint by rules the very case in which the taste can demonstrate its greatest perfection in projects of the imagination.

5: 243 All stiff regularity (whatever approaches mathematical regularity) is of itself contrary to taste: the consideration of it affords no lasting entertainment, but rather, insofar as it does not expressly have cognition or a determinate practical end as its aim, it induces boredom. [. . .]

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Second Book *Analytic of the Sublime*

§ 23

Transition from the Faculty for Judging^a the Beautiful to that for Judging the Sublime

The beautiful coincides with the sublime in that both please for themselves.¹ And further in that both presuppose neither a judgment of sense nor a logically determining judgment, but a judgment of reflection: consequently the satisfaction does not depend on a sensation, like that in the agreeable, nor on a determinate concept, like the satisfaction in the good; but it is nevertheless still related to concepts, although it is indeterminate which, hence the satisfaction is connected to the mere presentation or to the faculty for that, through which the faculty of presentation or the imagination is considered, in the case of a given intuition, to be in accord with the **faculty of concepts** of the understanding or of reason, as promoting the latter. Hence both sorts of judgments are also **singular**, and yet judgments that profess

to be universally valid in regard to every subject, although they lay claim merely to the feeling of pleasure and not to any cognition of the object.

But notable differences between the two also strike the eye. The beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in limitation; the sublime, by contrast, is to be found in a formless object insofar as **limitlessness** is represented in it, or at its instance, and yet it is also thought as a totality: so that the beautiful seems to be taken as the presentation of an indeterminate concept of the understanding, but the sublime as that of a similar concept of reason. Thus the satisfaction is connected in the first case with the representation of **quality**, but in this case with that of **quantity**. Also the latter pleasure is very different in kind from the former, in that the former (the beautiful)^b directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life,² and hence is compatible with charms and an imagination at play, while the latter (the feeling of the sublime)^c is a pleasure that arises only indirectly, being generated, namely, by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital powers and the immediately following and all the more powerful outpouring of them; hence as an emotion it seems to be not play but something serious in the activity of the imagination. Hence it is also incompatible with charms, and, since the mind is not merely attracted by the object, but is also always reciprocally repelled by it, the satisfaction in the sublime does not so much contain^d positive pleasure as it does admiration or respect, i.e., it deserves to be called negative pleasure.³

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The most important and intrinsic difference between the sublime and the beautiful, however, is this: that if, as is appropriate, we here consider first only the sublime in objects of nature (that in art is, after all, always restricted to the conditions of agreement with nature),⁴ natural beauty (the self-sufficient kind) carries with it a purposiveness in its form, through which the object seems as it were to be predetermined for our power of judgment, and thus constitutes an object of

^a*Beurtheilungsvermögen.*

^bThe parenthetical phrase was added in the second edition.

^cThe parenthetical phrase was added in the second edition.

^dThis verb was added in the second edition.

satisfaction in itself, whereas that which, without any rationalizing, merely in apprehension, excites in us the feeling of the sublime, may to be sure^a appear in its form to be contrapurposive for our power of judgment, unsuitable for our faculty of presentation, and as it were doing violence to our imagination, but^b is nevertheless judged all the more sublime for that.

But from this one immediately sees that we express ourselves on the whole incorrectly if we call some **object of nature** sublime, although we can quite correctly call very many of them beautiful; for how can we designate with an expression of approval that which is apprehended^c in itself as contrapurposive? We can say no more than that the object serves for the presentation of a sublimity that can be found in the mind; for what is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though no presentation adequate to them is possible, are provoked and called to mind precisely by this inadequacy, which does allow of sensible presentation. Thus the wide ocean, enraged by storms, cannot be called sublime. Its visage is horrible; and one must already have filled the mind with all sorts of ideas if by means of such an intuition it is to be put in the mood for a feeling which is itself sublime, in that the mind is incited to abandon sensibility and to occupy itself with ideas that contain a higher purposiveness.

The self-sufficient beauty of nature reveals to us a technique of nature, which makes it possible to represent it as a system in accordance with laws the principle of which we do not encounter anywhere in our entire faculty of understanding, namely that of a purposiveness with respect to the use of the power of judgment in regard to appearances, so that this must be judged^d as belonging not merely to nature in its purposeless mechanism but rather also to the analogy with^e art. Thus it actually expands not our cognition of natural objects, but our concept of nature, namely as a

mere mechanism, into the concept of nature as art: which invites profound investigations into the possibility of such a form. But in that which we are accustomed to call sublime in nature there is so little^f that leads to particular objective principles and forms of nature corresponding to these that it is mostly rather in its chaos or in its wildest and most unruly disorder and devastation, if only it allows a glimpse of magnitude and might, that it excites the ideas of the sublime. From this we see that the concept of the sublime in nature is far from being as important and rich in consequences as that of its beauty, and that in general it indicates nothing purposive in nature itself, but only in the possible **use** of its intuitions to make palpable in ourselves a purposiveness that is entirely independent of nature. For the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground outside ourselves, but for the sublime merely one in ourselves and in the way of thinking that introduces sublimity into the representation of the former – a very necessary introductory remark, which entirely separates the ideas of the sublime from that of a purposiveness of **nature**, and makes of the theory of the sublime a mere appendix to the aesthetic judging^g of the purposiveness of nature, since by this means no particular form is represented in the latter, but only a purposive use that the imagination makes of its representation is developed.

§ 24

On the Division of an Investigation of the Feeling of the Sublime

As far as the division of the moments of the aesthetic judging^h of objects in relation to the feeling of the sublime is concerned, the analytic will be able to proceed in accordance with the same principle that was used in the analysis of judgments of taste. For as a judgment of the aesthetic reflecting power of judgment, the satisfaction in the sublime, just like that in the beautiful, must be represented as universally valid in its **quantity**, as without interest in its **quality**, as subjective purposiveness

^aIn the second edition, *zwar*; in the first edition, *gar* (even).

^bAdded in the second edition.

^c*aufgefaßt*; in the first edition, *abgefaßt* (conceived).

^d*beurtheilt*.

^eThe words “the analogy with” were added in the second edition.

^fFollowing the first edition in reading *so gar nichts* instead of *sogar nichts* (even nothing).

^g*Beurtheilung*.

^h*Beurtheilung*.

in its relation, and the latter, as far as its **modality** is concerned, as necessary. Thus the method here will not depart from that in the preceding section,^a though some account must be taken of the fact that there, where the aesthetic judgment concerned the form of the object, we began with the investigation of quality, but here, in view of the formlessness that can pertain to that which we call sublime, we will begin with quantity as the first moment of the aesthetic judgment on the sublime; the ground for which, however, is to be seen from the preceding §.

But one division is necessary in the analysis of the sublime which that of the beautiful did not require, namely that into the **mathematically** and the **dynamically sublime**.⁵

For since the feeling of the sublime brings with it as its characteristic mark a **movement** of the mind connected with the judging^b of the object, whereas the taste for the beautiful presupposes and preserves the mind in **calm** contemplation, yet this movement is to be judged^c as subjectively purposive (because the sublime pleases), thus this movement is related through the imagination either to the **faculty of cognition** or to the **faculty of desire**, but in both relations the purposiveness of the given representation is judged^d only with regard to this faculty (without an end or interest): for then the first is attributed to the object as a **mathematical**, the second as a **dynamical** disposition of the imagination, and thus the object is represented as sublime in the twofold manner intended.

[...]

Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments

[...]

§ 36

On the Problem for a Deduction of Judgments of Taste

The perception of an object can be immediately combined with the concept of an object in general, for which the former contains the empirical

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predicates, for a judgment of cognition, and a judgment of experience can thereby be produced. Now this is grounded in *a priori* concepts of the synthetic unity of the manifold, in order to think it as the determination of an object; and these concepts (the categories) require a deduction, which, moreover, was given in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, by means of which the solution to the problem “How are synthetic *a priori* judgments of cognition possible?” was provided.¹ This problem thus concerned the *a priori* principles of pure understanding and its theoretical judgments.

However, a perception can also be immediately combined with a feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) and a satisfaction that accompanies the representation of the object and serves it instead of a predicate, and an aesthetic judgment, which is not a cognitive judgment, can thus arise. Such a judgment, if it is not a mere judgment of sensation but a formal judgment of reflection, which requires this satisfaction of everyone as necessary, must be grounded in something as an *a priori* principle, even if only a merely subjective principle (if an objective principle for this kind of judgment would be impossible), but which, as such a principle, also requires a deduction, by means of which it may be comprehended how an aesthetic judgment could lay claim to necessity. This is the basis of the problem with which we are now concerned: How are judgments of taste possible? This problem thus concerns the *a priori* principles of the pure power of judgment in **aesthetic judgments**, i.e., in those where it does not (as in theoretical judgments) merely have to subsume under objective concepts of the understanding and stands under a law, but where it is itself, subjectively, both object as well as law.

This problem can also be represented thus: How is a judgment possible which, merely from **one's own** feeling of pleasure in an object, independent of its concept, judges^c this pleasure, as attached to the representation of the same object **in every other subject**, *a priori*, i.e., without having to wait for the assent of others?

That judgments of taste are synthetic is readily seen, because they go beyond the concept and even the intuition of the object, and add to that as a predicate something that is not even cognition

^aThat is, the “Analytic of the Beautiful.”

^b*Beurtheilung*.

^c*beurtheilt*.

^d*beurtheilt*.

^e*beurtheilte*.

at all, namely the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure). However, that such judgments, even though the predicate (of **one's own** pleasure that is combined with the representation) is empirical, are nevertheless, as far as the requisite assent **of everyone** is concerned, *a priori* judgments, or would be taken as such, is already implicit in the expressions of their claim; and thus this problem of the critique of the power of judgment belongs under the general problem of transcendental philosophy: How are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible?

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§ 37

What is Really Asserted *a Priori* of an Object in a Judgment of Taste?

That the representation of an object is immediately combined with a pleasure can be perceived only internally, and would, if one wanted to indicate nothing more than this, yield a merely empirical judgment. For I cannot combine a determinate feeling (of pleasure or displeasure) *a priori* with any representation, except where my ground is an *a priori* principle of reason determining the will; for then the pleasure (in the moral feeling) is the consequence of it, but precisely on that account it cannot be compared with the pleasure in taste at all, since it requires a determinate concept of a law, while the judgment of taste, by contrast, is to be combined immediately with the mere judging,^a prior to any concept. Hence all judgments of taste are also singular judgments, since they combine their predicate of satisfaction not with a concept but with a given singular empirical representation.

Thus it is not the pleasure but **the universal validity of this pleasure** perceived in the mind as connected with the mere judging^b of an object that is represented in a judgment of taste as a universal rule for the power of judgment, valid for everyone. It is an empirical judgment that I perceive and judge^c an object with pleasure. But it is an *a priori* judgment that I find it beautiful, i.e., that I may require that satisfaction of everyone as necessary.²

^aBeurtheilung.

^bBeurtheilung.

^cbeurtheilte.

§ 38

Deduction of Judgments of Taste

If it is admitted that in a pure judgment of taste the satisfaction in the object is combined with the mere judging^d of its form, then it is nothing other than the subjective purposiveness of that form for the power of judgment that we sense as combined with the representation of the object in the mind. Now since the power of judgment in regard to the formal rules of judging,^e without any matter (neither sensation^f nor concept), can be directed only to the subjective conditions of the use of the power of judgment in general (which is restricted^g neither to the particular kind of sense nor to a particular concept of understanding), and thus to that subjective element that one can presuppose in all human beings (as requisite for possible cognitions in general), the correspondence of a representation with these conditions of the power of judgment must be able to be assumed to be valid for everyone *a priori*. I.e., the pleasure or subjective purposiveness of the representation for the relation of the cognitive faculties in the judging^h of a sensible object in general can rightly be expected of everyone.

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Remark

This deduction is so easy because it is not necessary for it to justify any objective reality of a concept; for beauty is not a concept of the object, and the judgment of taste is not a judgment of cognition. It asserts only that we are justified in presupposing universally in every human being the same subjective conditions of the power of judgment that we find in ourselves; and then only if we have correctly subsumed the given object under these conditions.ⁱ Now although this latter has unavoidable difficulties that do not pertain to

^dBeurtheilung.

^eBeurtheilung.

^fSinnenempfindung.

^gHere we follow the first edition, which has *eingeschränkt*, rather than the second, which prints *eingeschränkt* (arranged for or equipped for).

^hBeurtheilung.

ⁱIn the first edition, there was a comma instead of a period here, and the sentence continued "which has unavoidable ...".

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the logical power of judgment (because in the latter one subsumes under concepts, but in the aesthetic power of judgment one subsumes under a relation that is merely a matter of sensation, that of the imagination and the understanding reciprocally attuned to each other in the represented form of the object, where the subsumption can easily be deceptive);^a yet nothing is thereby taken away from the legitimacy of the claim of the power of judgment in counting on universal assent, which only comes down to this: the correctness of the principle for validly judging for everyone on subjective grounds. For as far as the difficulty and the doubt about the correctness of the subsumption under that principle is concerned, it makes the legitimacy of the claim to this validity of an aesthetic judgment in general, and thus the principle itself, no more doubtful than the equally (although not as often and as easily) erroneous subsumption of the logical power of judgment under its principle can make the latter, which is objective, doubtful. But if the question were to be “How is it possible^b to assume nature as a sum of objects of taste *a priori*?,” then this problem is related to teleology, because producing forms that are purposive for our power of judgment would have to be regarded as an end of nature that pertains to its concept essentially. But the correctness of this assumption is still very dubious, whereas the reality of the beauties of nature is open^c to experience.

[. . .]

§ 40

On Taste as a Kind of *Sensus Communis*³

The power of judgment, when what is noticed is not so much its reflection as merely the result of that, is often called a sense, and there is talk of a sense of truth, a sense for propriety, for justice, etc., although one surely knows, or at least properly ought to know, that these concepts cannot have their seat in a sense, and that even less could

such a sense have the slightest capacity for the expression of universal rules, but rather that a representation of truth, suitability, beauty, or justice could never enter our thoughts if we could not elevate ourselves above the senses to higher cognitive faculties. **The common human understanding**, which, as merely healthy (not yet cultivated) understanding, is regarded as the least that can be expected from anyone who lays claim to the name of a human being, thus has the unfortunate honor of being endowed with the name of common sense (*sensus communis*), and indeed^d in such a way that what is understood by the word common (not merely in our language, which here really contains an ambiguity, but in many others as well) comes to the same as the *vulgar*,^e which is encountered everywhere, to possess which is certainly not an advantage or an honor.

By “*sensus communis*,”^f however, must be understood the idea of a **communal** sense, i.e., a faculty for judging^g that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else’s way of representing in thought, in order **as it were** to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole and thereby avoid the illusion which, from subjective private conditions that could easily be held to be objective, would have a detrimental influence on the judgment. Now this happens by one holding his judgment up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgments of others, and putting himself into the position of everyone else, merely by abstracting from the limitations that contingently attach to our own judging,^h which is in turn accomplished by leaving out as far as is possible everything in one’sⁱ representational state that is matter, i.e., sensation, and attending solely to the formal peculiarities of his representation or his representational state. Now perhaps this operation of reflection seems much too artificial to be attributed to the faculty that we call the **common** sense; but it only appears thus if we express it in

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^d“Indeed” (*zwar*) added in the second edition.

^eKant prints the Latin word *vulgare*.

^fKant prints the first word in roman type and the second in italics, presumably meaning to add emphasis to the word “*communis*.”

^g*Beurtheilungsvermögen*

^h*Beurtheilung*.

ⁱIn the first edition, “in our” (*in unserm*).

^aIn the first edition, this clause was not enclosed in parentheses.

^bThe first edition here includes the word *auch* (also), omitted from the second.

^cThe first edition has *bloß* (merely) instead of *offen*.

abstract formulas; in itself, nothing is more natural than to abstract from charm and emotion if one is seeking a judgment that is to serve as a universal rule.

The following maxims of the common human understanding do not belong here, to be sure, as parts of the critique of taste, but can nevertheless serve to elucidate its fundamental principles. They are the following: 1. To think for oneself; 2. To think in the position of everyone else; 3. Always to think in accord with oneself.⁴ The first is the maxim of the **unprejudiced** way of thinking, the second of the **broad-minded** way, the third that of the consistent way. The first is the maxim of a reason that is never **passive**. The tendency toward the latter, hence toward heteronomy of reason, is called **prejudice**; and the greatest prejudice of all is that of representing reason as if it were not subject to the rules of nature on which the understanding grounds it by means of its own essential law:^a i.e., **superstition**. Liberation from superstition is called **enlightenment**, since, although this designation is also applied to liberation from prejudices in general, it is superstition above all (*in sensu eminenti*) that deserves to be called a prejudice, since the blindness to which superstition leads, which indeed it even demands as an obligation, is what makes most evident the need to be led by others, hence the condition of a passive reason.⁵ As far as the second maxim of the way of thinking is concerned, we are accustomed to calling someone limited (**narrow-minded**, in contrast to **broad-minded**) whose talents do not suffice for any great employment (especially if it is intensive). But the issue here is not the faculty of cognition, but the **way of thinking** needed to make a purposive use of it, which, however small the scope and degree of a person's natural endowment may be, nevertheless reveals a man of a **broad-minded way of thinking** if he sets himself apart from the subjective private conditions of the judgment, within which so many others are as if bracketed,

and reflects on his own judgment from a **universal standpoint** (which he can only determine by putting himself into the standpoint of others). The third maxim, namely that of the **consistent** way of thinking, is the most difficult to achieve, and can only be achieved through the combination of the first two and after frequent observance of them has made them automatic. One can say that the first of these maxims is that maxim of the understanding, the second that of the power of judgment, the third that of reason.

I take up again the thread that has been laid aside through this digression, and say that taste can be called *sensus communis* with greater justice than can the healthy understanding, and that the aesthetic power of judgment rather than the intellectual can bear the name of a communal sense,^{*} if indeed one would use the word "sense" of an effect of mere reflection on the mind: for there one means by "sense" the feeling of pleasure. One could even define taste as the faculty for judging^b that which makes our feeling in a given representation **universally communicable** without the mediation of a concept.

The aptitude of human beings for communicating their thoughts also requires a relation between the imagination and the understanding in order to associate intuitions with concepts and concepts in turn with intuitions, which flow together into a cognition; but in that case the agreement of the two powers of the mind is **lawful**, under the constraint of determinate concepts. Only where the imagination in its freedom arouses the understanding, and the latter, without concepts, sets the imagination into a regular^c play is the representation communicated, not as a thought, but as the inner feeling of a purposive state of mind.

Taste is thus the faculty for judging^d *a priori* the communicability of the feelings that are combined with a given representation (without the mediation of a concept).

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^aFollowing the second edition; the first edition has *unter welchen das größte, die Natur sich Regeln, die der Verstand ihr durch ... zum Grunde liegt*, which would imply that it is nature rather than reason which in the case of prejudice fails to be subjected to the essential law of understanding.

^{*}One could designate taste as *sensus communis aestheticus*, common human understanding as *sensus communis logiens*.

^b*Beurtheilungsvermögen*

^c*regelmäßiges*.

^d*zu beurtheilen*.

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If one could assume that the mere universal communicability of his feeling must in itself already involve an interest for us (which, however, one is not justified in inferring from the constitution of a merely reflective power of judgment), then one would be able to explain how it is that the feeling in the judgment of taste is expected of everyone as if it were a duty.⁶

[...]

§ 42

On the Intellectual Interest in the Beautiful

It has been with a good intention that those who would gladly direct all of the occupations of human beings to which these are driven by their inner natural predisposition to the ultimate end of humanity, namely the morally good, have taken it as a sign of a good moral character to take an interest in the beautiful in general. But they have been contradicted by others, not without ground, who have appealed to the experience that virtuosi of taste, who are not only often but even usually vain, obstinate, and given to corrupting passions, could perhaps even less than others lay claim to the merit of devotion to moral principles; and so it appears that the feeling for the beautiful is not only specifically different from the moral feeling (as it actually is), but also that the interest that can be combined with it can be united with the moral interest with difficulty, and by no means through an inner affinity.

Now I gladly concede that the interest in the **beautiful in art** (as part of which I also count the artful use of the beauties of nature for decoration, and thus for vanity) provides no proof of a way of thinking that is devoted to the morally good or even merely inclined to it.^a By contrast, however, I do assert that to take an **immediate interest** in the beauty of **nature** (not merely to have taste in order to judge^b it) is always a mark of a good soul, and that if^c this interest is habitual, it at least indicates a disposition of the mind that is favorable to

the moral feeling, if it is gladly combined with the **viewing of nature**. It must be remembered, however, that I mean here strictly the beautiful forms of nature, and by contrast set to one side the **charms** that it usually combines so abundantly with them, since the interest in them is to be sure also immediate, but nevertheless empirical.

Someone who alone (and without any intention of wanting to communicate his observations to others) considers the beautiful shape of a wildflower, a bird, an insect, etc., in order to marvel at it, to love it, and to be unwilling for it to be entirely absent from nature, even though some harm might come to him from it rather than there being any prospect of advantage to him from it, takes an immediate and certainly intellectual interest in the beauty of nature. I.e., not only the form of its product but also its existence pleases him, even though no sensory charm has a part in this and he does not combine any sort of end with it.

However, it is worth noting here that if someone had secretly deceived this lover of the beautiful and had planted artificial flowers (which can be manufactured to look entirely similar to natural ones) or had placed artfully carved birds on the twigs of trees, and he then discovered the deception, the immediate interest that he had previously taken in it would immediately disappear, though perhaps another, namely the interest of vanity in decorating his room with them for the eyes of others, would take its place. The thought that nature has produced that beauty must accompany the intuition and reflection, and on this alone is grounded the immediate interest that one takes in it.^d Otherwise there remains either a mere judgment of taste without any interest, or only one combined with a mediate interest, namely one related to society:^e which latter affords no sure indications of a morally good way of thinking.

This preeminence of the beauty of nature over the beauty of art in alone awakening an immediate interest,^f even if the former were to be surpassed by the latter in respect of form, is in agreement with the refined and well-founded

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^aIn the first edition, there was a comma rather than a period here.

^b*beurtheilen*.

^cThe first edition says simply "if" instead of "and that if."

^dIn the first edition, this period was a comma.

^eIn the first edition, this colon was a period.

^fIn the first edition, "in that in the former alone an interest is taken."

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thinking of all human beings who have cultivated their moral feeling. If a man who has enough taste to judge about products of beautiful art^a with the greatest correctness and refinement gladly leaves the room in which are to be found those beauties that sustain vanity and at best social joys and turns to the beautiful in nature, in order as it were to find here an ecstasy for his spirit in a line of thought that he can never fully develop, then we would consider this choice of his with esteem and presuppose in him a beautiful soul, to which no connoisseur and lover of art can lay claim on account of the interest that he takes in his objects. – Now what is the distinction between such different assessments of two sorts of objects, which in the mere judgment of taste would scarcely compete for preeminence over each other?

We have a faculty of merely aesthetic judgment,^b for judging of forms without concepts and for finding a satisfaction in the mere judging^c of them which we at the same time make into a rule for everyone without this judgment being grounded on an interest or producing one. – Alternatively, we also have a faculty of intellectual judgment,^d for determining *a priori* for mere forms of practical maxims (insofar as they qualify in themselves for universal legislation) a satisfaction which we make into a law for everyone without our judgment being grounded on any interest, **although it produces one**. The pleasure or displeasure in the first judgment is called that of taste, in the second that of moral feeling.

But since it also interests reason that the ideas (for which it produces an immediate interest in the moral feeling) also have objective reality, i.e., that nature should at least show some trace or give a sign that it contains in itself some sort of ground for assuming a lawful correspondence of

its products with our satisfaction that is independent of all interest (which we recognize *a priori* as a law valid for everyone, without being able to ground this on proofs), reason must take an interest in every manifestation in nature of a correspondence similar to this; consequently the mind cannot reflect on the beauty of nature without finding itself at the same time to be interested in it.⁷ Because of this affinity, however, this interest is moral, and he who takes such an interest in the beautiful in nature can do so only insofar as he has already firmly established his interest in the morally good. We thus have cause at least to suspect a predisposition to a good moral disposition in one who is immediately interested in the beauty of nature.

[. . .]

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§ 43

On Art in General⁸

1) **Art** is distinguished from **nature** as doing (*facere*) is from acting or producing^e in general (*agere*), and the product or consequence of the former is distinguished as a **work** (*opus*) from the latter as an effect^f (*effectus*).

By right, only production through freedom, i.e., through a capacity for choice that grounds its actions in reason, should be called art. For although people are fond of describing the product of the bees (the regularly constructed honeycombs) as a work of art, this is done only on account of the analogy with the latter; that is, as soon as we recall that they do not ground their work on any rational consideration of their own, we say that it is a product of their nature (of instinct), and as art it is ascribed only to their creator.

If someone searching through a moorland bog finds, as sometimes happens, a piece of carved wood, he does not say that it is a product of nature, but of art; the cause that produced it conceived of an end, which the wood has to thank for its form. In other cases too one sees an art in everything that is so constituted that a representation of it in its cause must have preceded its reality (as even in the case of bees), although it may not exactly have

^a*Produkte der schönen Kunst*. In the eighteenth century, the German phrases *schöne Kunst* and *schöne Künste* were used like the English phrases “fine art” and “fine arts,” and could easily be translated that way here. But since there are passages, such as the first paragraph of § 44, where this would require us to translate *schön* two different ways, we will use the literal rather than more idiomatic translation.

^b*Vermögen der bloß ästhetischen Urtheilskraft*.

^c*Beurtheilung*.

^d*Vermögen einer intellectuellen Urtheilskraft*.

^e*Wirken*.

^f*Wirkung*.

thought of the effect; but if something is called a work of art without qualification, in order to distinguish it from an effect of nature, then by that is always understood a work of human beings.

2) **Art** as a skill of human beings is also distinguished from **science** (to **be able** from to **know**), as a practical faculty is distinguished from a theoretical one, as technique is distinguished from theory (as the art of surveying is distinguished from geometry).⁹ And thus that which one can do as soon as one **knows** what should be done is not exactly called art. Only that which one does not immediately have the skill to do even if one knows it completely belongs to that extent to art. **Camper**¹⁰ describes quite precisely how the best shoe must be made, but he certainly was not able to make one.

3) **Art** is also distinguished from **handicraft**: the first is called **liberal**,^a the second can also be called **remunerative art**.¹¹ The first is regarded as if it could turn out purposively (be successful) only as play, i.e., an occupation that is agreeable in itself; the second is regarded as labor, i.e., an occupation that is disagreeable (burdensome) in itself and is attractive only because of its effect (e.g., the remuneration), and hence as something that can be compulsorily imposed. Judging^b whether, in the hierarchy of the guilds, clockmakers should be counted as artists but smiths as craftsmen requires a different standpoint than the one adopted here, namely, the proportion of the talents on which the one or the other of these occupations must be grounded. Further, I will not here discuss whether among the so-called seven liberal^c arts there may not have been included some that are to be counted among the sciences, and several others that are to be compared with crafts. But it is not inadvisable to recall that in all liberal arts there is nevertheless required something compulsory, or, as it is called, a **mechanism**, without which the **spirit**, which must be **free**^d in the art and which alone animates the work, would have no body at all and would entirely evaporate (e.g., in the art of poetry, correctness and richness of diction as well as prosody and meter), since

many modern teachers believe that they can best promote a liberal art if they remove all compulsion from it and transform it from labor into mere play.

§ 44

On Beautiful Art^e

There is neither a science of the beautiful, only a critique, nor beautiful science, only beautiful art.¹² For if the former existed, then it would be determined in it scientifically, i.e., by means of proofs, whether something should be held to be beautiful or not; thus the judgment about beauty, if it belonged to a science, would not be a judgment of taste. As for the second, a science which, as such, is supposed to be beautiful, is absurd. For if in it, as a science, one were to ask for grounds and proofs, one would be sent packing with tasteful expressions (*bons mots*). – What has given rise to the customary expression **beautiful sciences**¹³ is without doubt nothing but the fact that it has been quite rightly noticed that for beautiful art in its full perfection much science is required, such as, e.g., acquaintance with ancient languages, wide reading of those authors considered to be classical, history, acquaintance with antiquities, etc., and for that reason these historical sciences, because they constitute the necessary preparation and foundation for beautiful art, and also in part because acquaintance with the products of beautiful art (rhetoric and poetry) is even included within them, have because of a verbal confusion themselves been called beautiful sciences.

If art, adequate for the **cognition** of a possible object, merely performs the actions requisite to make it actual, it is **mechanical**; but if it has the feeling of pleasure as its immediate aim, then it is called **aesthetic** art. This is either **agreeable** or **beautiful** art. It is the former if its end is that pleasure accompany the representations as mere **sensations**, the latter, if its end is that it accompany these as **kinds of cognition**.

^e*Von der schönen Kunst*. As noted in the previous section, an idiomatic translation of Kant's expression *schöne Künste* would be "fine arts," but in order to preserve the logic of his argument, as in the first sentence of the following paragraph, we have preferred a literal to an idiomatic translation.

^a*freye*.

^b*Beurtheilung*.

^c*freyen*.

^d*frey*.

Agreeable arts are those which are aimed merely at enjoyment; of this kind are all those charms that can gratify the company at a table, such as telling entertaining stories, getting the company talking in an open and lively manner, creating by means of jokes and laughter a certain tone of merriment, in which, as is said, much can be chattered about and nobody will be held responsible for what he says, because it is only intended as momentary entertainment, not as some enduring material for later reflection or discussion. (Also included here is the way in which the table is set out for enjoyment, or even, at big parties, the table-music – an odd thing, which is supposed to sustain the mood of joyfulness merely as an agreeable noise, and to encourage the free conversation of one neighbor with another without anyone paying the least attention to its composition.) Also included here are all games that involve no interest beyond that of making time pass unnoticed.

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Beautiful art, by contrast, is a kind of representation that is purposive in itself and, though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation^a of the mental powers for sociable communication.¹⁴

The universal communicability of a pleasure already includes in its concept that this must not be a pleasure of enjoyment, from mere sensation, but one of reflection; and thus aesthetic art, as beautiful art, is one that has the reflecting power of judgment and not mere sensation^b as its standard.

§ 45

Beautiful Art is an Art to the Extent that it Seems at the Same Time to be Nature

In a product of art one must be aware that it is art, and not nature; yet the purposiveness in its form must still seem to be as free from all constraint by arbitrary rules as if it were a mere product of nature. On this feeling of freedom in the play of our cognitive powers, which must yet at the same time be purposive, rests that pleasure which is alone universally communicable though

without being grounded on concepts. Nature was beautiful if at the same time it looked like art; and art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature.¹⁵

For we can generally say, whether it is the beauty of nature or of art that is at issue: **that is beautiful which pleases in the mere judging^c** (neither in sensation nor through a concept). Now art always has a determinate intention of producing something. If however this were a mere sensation (something merely subjective) that is supposed to be accompanied with pleasure, then this product would please, in the judging,^d only by means of the feeling of sense. If the intention were aimed at the production of a determinate object, then, if it were achieved through art, the object would please only through concepts. But in either case the art would not please **in the mere judging^e**, i.e., it would not please as beautiful but as mechanical art.

Thus the purposiveness in the product of beautiful art, although it is certainly intentional, must nevertheless not seem intentional; i.e., beautiful art must be **regarded** as nature, although of course one is aware of it as art. A product of art appears as nature, however, if we find it to agree **punctiliously** but not **painstakingly** with rules in accordance with which alone the product can become what it ought to be, that is, without the academic form showing through,^f i.e., without showing any sign that the rule has hovered before the eyes of the artist and fettered his mental powers.

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§ 46

Beautiful Art is Art of Genius

Genius is the talent (natural gift) that gives the rule to art. Since the talent, as an inborn productive faculty of the artist, itself belongs to nature, this could also be expressed thus: **Genius** is the inborn predisposition of the mind (*ingenium*) **through which** nature gives the rule to art.¹⁶

Whatever the case may be with this definition, and whether it is merely arbitrary or is adequate to the concept which is usually associated with

^aCultur.

^bSinnenempfindung.

^cBeurtheilung.

^dBeurtheilung.

^eBeurtheilung.

^fThis clause was added in the second edition.

the word **genius** or not (which is to be discussed in the following sections), it can nevertheless already be proved at the outset that, according to the significance of the word assumed here, beautiful arts must necessarily be considered as arts of **genius**.

For every art presupposes rules which first lay the foundation by means of which a product that is to be called artistic is first represented as possible. The concept of beautiful art, however, does not allow the judgment concerning the beauty of its product to be derived from any sort of rule that has a concept for its determining ground, and thus has as its ground a concept of how it is possible.^a Thus beautiful art cannot itself think up the rule in accordance with which it is to bring its product into being. Yet since without a preceding rule a product can never be called art, nature in the subject (and by means of the disposition of its faculties) must give the rule to art, i.e., beautiful art is possible only as a product of genius.

From this one sees: That genius 1) is a **talent** for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition of skill for that which can be learned in accordance with some rule, consequently that **originality** must be its primary characteristic. 2) That since there can also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e., **exemplary**, hence, while not themselves the result of imitation, they must yet serve others in that way, i.e., as a standard or a rule for judging.^b 3) That it cannot itself describe or indicate scientifically how it brings its product into being, but rather that it gives the rule as **nature**, and hence the author of a product that he owes to his genius does not know himself how the ideas for it come to him, and also does not have it in his power to think up such things at will or according to plan, and to communicate to others precepts that would put them in a position to produce similar products. (For that is also presumably how the word "genius" is derived from *genius*,^c in the sense of the particular spirit given to a person at birth, which protects and guides

him, and from whose inspiration those original ideas stem.) 4) That by means of genius nature does not prescribe the rule to science but to art, and even to the latter only insofar as it is to be beautiful art.

§ 47

Elucidation and Confirmation of the Above Explanation of Genius

Everyone agrees that genius is entirely opposed to the **spirit of imitation**.¹⁷ Now since learning is nothing but imitation, even the greatest aptitude for learning, facility for learning (capacity) as such, still does not count as genius. But even if one thinks or writes^d for himself, and does not merely take up what others have thought, indeed even if he invents a great deal for art and science, this is still not a proper reason for calling such a great **mind** (in contrast to someone who, because he can never do more than merely learn and imitate, is called a **blockhead**) a **genius**, since just this sort of thing **could** also have been learned, and thus still lies on the natural path of inquiry and reflection in accordance with rules, and is not specifically distinct from that which can be acquired with effort by means of imitation.¹⁸ Thus everything that Newton expounded in his immortal work on the principles of natural philosophy,¹⁹ no matter how great a mind it took to discover it, can still be learned; but one cannot learn to write inspired poetry, however exhaustive all the rules for the art of poetry and however excellent the models for it may be. The reason is that Newton could make all the steps that he had to take, from the first elements of geometry to his great and profound discoveries, entirely intuitive not only to himself but also to everyone else, and thus set them out for posterity quite determinately; but no Homer or Wieland²⁰ can indicate how his ideas, which are fantastic and yet at the same time rich in thought, arise and come together in his head, because he himself does not know it and thus cannot teach it to anyone else either. In the scientific sphere, therefore, the greatest discoverer differs only in degree from the

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^aIn the first edition, "and thus does not have as its foundation any concept of how it is possible."

^b*Beurtheilung*.

^cThat is, the German word *Genie* is derived from the Latin word *genius*.

^d*dichtet*.

most hard working imitator and apprentice, whereas he differs in kind from someone who is gifted by nature for beautiful art. This is not to belittle those great men, to whom the human race owes so much, in comparison to those favorites of nature with respect to their talent for beautiful art. In their very talent for ever advancing greater perfection of cognition and all the utility that depends on it, and likewise in the education of others for the acquisition of the same knowledge, lies the great advantage of such people over those who have the honor of being called geniuses: since for the latter art somewhere comes to a halt, because a limit is set for it beyond which it cannot go, which presumably has also long since been reached and cannot be extended any more; and moreover such a skill cannot be communicated, but is apportioned to each immediately from the hand of nature, and thus dies with him, until nature one day similarly endows another, who needs nothing more than an example in order to let the talent of which he is aware operate in a similar way.

Since the gift of nature must give the rule to art (as beautiful art), what sort of rule is this? It cannot be couched in a formula to serve as a precept, for then the judgment about the beautiful would be determinable in accordance with concepts; rather, the rule must be abstracted from the deed, i.e. from the product, against which others may test their own talent, letting it serve them as a model not for **copying**^a but for **imitation**.^{b,21} How this is possible is difficult to explain. The ideas of the artist arouse similar ideas in his apprentice if nature has equipped him with a similar proportion of mental powers. The models of beautiful art are thus the only means for transmitting these to posterity, which could not happen through mere descriptions (especially not in the field of the arts of discourse); and even in the latter case it is only those in old and dead languages, now preserved only as learned ones, that can become classical.²²

Although mechanical and beautiful art, the first as a mere art of diligence and learning, the second as that of genius, are very different from each other, still there is no beautiful art in which

something mechanical, which can be grasped and followed according to rules, and thus something **academically correct**, does not constitute the essential condition of the art.²³ For something in it must be thought of as an end, otherwise one cannot ascribe its product to any art at all; it would be a mere product of chance. But in order to aim at an end in the work, determinate rules are required, from which one may not absolve oneself. Now since the originality of his talent constitutes one (but not the only) essential element of the character of the genius, superficial minds believe that they cannot show that they are blossoming geniuses any better than by pronouncing themselves free of the academic constraint of all rules, and they believe that one parades around better on a horse with the staggers than one that is properly trained. Genius can only provide rich **material** for products of art; its elaboration and **form** require a talent that has been academically trained, in order to make a use of it that can stand up to the power of judgment. But when someone speaks and decides like a genius even in matters of the most careful rational inquiry, then it is completely ridiculous; one does not rightly know whether one should laugh more at the charlatan who spreads about himself such a mist that one cannot judge^c clearly but can indulge in imagination all the more, or at the public, which trustingly imagines that its incapacity to recognize clearly and grasp the masterpiece of insight comes from the fact that whole masses of new truths are being thrown at it, in contrast with which detail (achieved by careful explanations and the academically correct examination of fundamental principles) seems to be merely the work of amateurs.

§ 48

On the Relation of Genius to Taste

For the **judging**^d of beautiful objects, as such, **taste** is required; but for beautiful art itself, i.e., for **producing** such objects, **genius** is required.²⁴

If genius is considered as a talent for beautiful art (which the proper meaning of the word

^a*Nachmachung.*

^b*Nachahmung.*

^c*beurtheilen.*

^d*Beurtheilung.*

implies), and with this in mind it is to be analyzed into the faculties that must come together to constitute such a talent, then it is necessary first to determine precisely the difference between the beauty of nature, the judging^a of which requires only taste, and the beauty of art, the possibility of which (which must also be taken account of in the judging^b of such an object) requires genius.

A beauty of nature is a **beautiful thing**; the beauty of art is a **beautiful representation** of a thing.²⁵

In order to judge^c a beauty of nature as such, I do not need first to have a concept of what sort of thing the object is supposed to be, i.e., it is not necessary for me to know the material purposiveness (the end), but the mere form without knowledge of the end pleases for itself in the judging.^d But if the object is given as a product of art, and is as such supposed to be declared to be beautiful, then, since art always presupposes an end in the cause (and its causality), a concept must first be the ground of what the thing is supposed to be, and, since the agreement of the manifold in a thing with its inner determination as an end is the perfection of the thing, in the judging of the beauty of art the perfection of the thing will also have to be taken into account, which is not even a question in the judging of a natural beauty (as such). – To be sure, in the judging especially of living objects in nature, e.g., a human being or a horse, objective purposiveness is also commonly taken into account for judging^e its beauty; but in that case the judgment is also no longer purely aesthetic, i.e., a mere judgment of taste. Nature is no longer judged as it appears as art, but to the extent that it really is art (albeit superhuman); and the teleological judgment serves as the foundation for the aesthetic and as a condition of which the latter must take account. In such a case, if, e.g., it is said “That is a beautiful woman,” then

in fact one thinks nothing other than that in her figure nature represents the ends in the feminine physique beautifully, for it is necessary to look beyond the mere form to a concept with which the object is thought in such a way through a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment.

Beautiful art displays its excellence precisely by describing beautifully things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing. The furies, diseases, devastations of war, and the like can, as harmful things, be very beautifully described, indeed even represented in painting; only one kind of ugliness cannot be represented in a way adequate to nature without destroying all aesthetic satisfaction, hence beauty in art, namely, that which arouses **loathing**. For since in this strange sensation, resting on sheer imagination, the object is represented as if it were imposing the enjoyment which we are nevertheless forcibly resisting, the artistic representation of the object is no longer distinguished in our sensation itself from the nature of the object itself, and it then becomes impossible for the former to be taken as beautiful. The art of sculpture, since in its products art is almost confused with nature, has also excluded the representation of ugly objects from its images,^f and thus permits, e.g., death (in a beautiful genius) or the spirit of war (in the person of Mars) to be represented through an allegory or attributes that look pleasing, hence only indirectly by means of an interpretation of reason, and not for the aesthetic power of judgment alone.²⁶

So much for the beautiful representation of an object, which is really only the form of the presentation of a concept by means of which the latter is universally communicated. – To give this form to the product of beautiful art, however, requires merely taste, to which the artist, after he has practiced and corrected it by means of various examples of art or nature, holds up his work, and after many, often laborious attempts to satisfy it, finds the form that contents him; hence this is not as it were a matter of inspiration or a free swing of the mental powers, but a slow and indeed painstaking improvement, in order to let it become adequate to the thought and yet not detrimental to the freedom in the play of the mental powers.

Taste, however, is merely a faculty for judging,^g not a productive faculty; and what is in accordance

^a*Beurtheilung*.

^b*Beurtheilung*.

^c*beurtheilen*; except where noted, further forms of the verb “to judge” in this paragraph are translations of this verb.

^d*Beurtheilung*; all occurrences of the noun “judging” throughout the rest of this paragraph translate this term.

^e*urtheilen*.

^f*Bildungen*.

^g*Beurtheilungs-*.

with it is for that very reason not a work of beautiful art, although it can be a product belonging to a useful and mechanical art or even to science, conforming to determinate rules which can be learned and which must be precisely followed. But the pleasing form which one gives to it is only the vehicle of communication and a manner, as it were, of presentation, in regard to which one still remains^a to a certain extent free, even if one is otherwise bound to a determinate end. Thus one demands that table settings, or a moral treatise, or even a sermon must have in themselves this form of beautiful art, though without seeming **studied**; but they are not on this account called works of beautiful art. Among the latter, however, are counted a poem, a piece of music, a picture gallery, and so on; and there, in one would-be work of beautiful art, one can often perceive genius without taste, while in another, taste without genius.

§ 49

On the Faculties of the Mind that Constitute Genius

One says of certain products, of which it is expected that they ought, at least in part, to reveal themselves as beautiful art, that they are without **spirit**, even though one finds nothing in them to criticize as far as taste is concerned. A poem can be quite pretty and elegant, but without **spirit**. A story is accurate and well organized, but without spirit. A solemn oration is thorough and at the same time flowery, but without spirit. Many a conversation is not without entertainment, but is still without spirit; even of a woman one may well say that she is pretty, talkative and charming, but without spirit. What is it then that is meant here by “spirit”?

Spirit, in an aesthetic significance, means the animating principle in the mind. That, however, by which this principle animates the soul, the material which it uses for this purpose, is that which purposively sets the mental powers into motion, i.e., into a play that is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end.²⁷

^aIn the first edition, “is” (*ist*) instead of “remains” (*bleibt*).

Now I maintain that this principle is nothing other than the faculty for the presentation of **aesthetic ideas**; by an aesthetic idea, however, I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., **concept**, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible. – One readily sees that it is the counterpart (pendant) of an **idea of reason**, which is, conversely, a concept to which no **intuition** (representation of the imagination) can be adequate.

The imagination (as a productive cognitive faculty) is, namely, very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it. We entertain ourselves with it when experience seems too mundane to us; we transform the latter, no doubt always in accordance with analogous laws, but also in accordance with principles that lie higher in reason (and which are every bit as natural to us as those in accordance with which the understanding apprehends empirical nature); in this we feel our freedom from the law of association (which applies to the empirical use of that faculty), in accordance with which material can certainly be lent to us by nature, but the latter can be transformed by us into something entirely different, namely into that which steps beyond nature.

One can call such representations of the imagination **ideas**:²⁸ on the one hand because they at least strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience, and thus seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas), which gives them the appearance of an objective reality; on the other hand, and indeed principally, because no concept can be fully adequate to them, as inner intuitions. The poet ventures to make sensible rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g., death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature, by means of an imagination that emulates the precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum; and it is really the art of poetry in which the faculty of aesthetic ideas can reveal itself in its full measure. This faculty, however, considered by

itself alone, is really only a talent (of the imagination).

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Now if we add to a concept a representation of the imagination that belongs to its presentation, but which by itself stimulates so much thinking that it can never be grasped in a determinate concept, hence which aesthetically enlarges the concept itself in an unbounded way, then in this case the imagination is creative, and sets the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion, that is, at the instigation of a representation it gives more to think about than can be grasped and made distinct in it (although it does, to be sure, belong to the concept of the object).

Those forms which do not constitute the presentation of a given concept itself, but, as supplementary representations of the imagination, express only the implications connected with it and its affinity with others, are called (aesthetic) **attributes** of an object whose concept, as an idea of reason, cannot be adequately presented. Thus Jupiter's eagle, with the lightning in its claws, is an attribute of the powerful king of heaven, as is the peacock of the splendid queen of heaven. They do not, like **logical attributes**, represent what lies in our concepts of the sublimity and majesty of creation, but something else, which gives the imagination cause to spread itself over a multitude of related representations, which let one think more than one can express in a concept determined by words; and they yield an **aesthetic idea**, which serves that idea of reason instead of logical presentation, although really only to animate the mind by opening up for it the prospect of an immeasurable field of related representations. Beautiful art, however, does this not only in painting or sculpture (where the names of the attributes are commonly used); rather, poetry and oratory also derive the spirit which animates their works solely from the aesthetic attributes of the objects, which go alongside the logical ones, and give the imagination an impetus to think more, although in an undeveloped way, than can be comprehended in a concept, and hence in a determinate linguistic expression. – For the sake of brevity, I must limit myself to only a few examples.

When the great king expressed himself in one of his poems thus: "Let us depart from life without grumbling and without regretting anything, leaving the world behind us replete with good

deeds. Thus does the sun, after it has completed its daily course, still spread a gentle light across the heavens; and the last rays that it sends forth into the sky are its last sighs for the well-being of the world,"²⁹ he animates his idea of reason of a cosmopolitan disposition even at the end of life by means of an attribute that the imagination (in the recollection of everything agreeable in a beautiful summer day, drawn to a close, which a bright evening calls to mind) associates with that representation, and which arouses a multitude of sensations and supplementary representations for which no expression is found. Conversely, even an intellectual concept can serve as the attribute of a representation of sense, and so animate the latter by means of the idea of the supersensible; but only insofar as the aesthetic, which is subjectively attached to the consciousness of the latter, is used to this end. Thus, e.g., a certain poet says in the description of a beautiful morning: "The sun streamed forth, as tranquillity streams from virtue."³⁰ The consciousness of virtue, when one puts oneself, even if only in thought, in the place of a virtuous person, spreads in the mind a multitude of sublime and calming feelings, and a boundless prospect into a happy future, which no expression that is adequate to a determinate concept fully captures.

In a word, the aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination, associated with a given concept, which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations in the free use of the imagination that no expression designating a determinate concept can be found for it, which therefore allows the addition to a concept of much that is unnameable, the feeling of which animates the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with the mere letter of language.

The mental powers, then, whose union (in a certain relation) constitutes **genius**, are

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²⁹Perhaps nothing more sublime has ever been said, or any thought more sublimely expressed, than in the inscription over the temple of **Isis** (Mother **Nature**): "I am all that is, that was, and that will be, and my veil no mortal has removed." **Segner** made use of this idea by means of a vignette, **rich in sense**, placed at the beginning of his theory of nature, in order at the outset to fill his pupil, whom he was ready to lead into this temple, with the holy fear that should dispose the mind to solemn attentiveness.³¹

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imagination and understanding. Only in the use of the imagination for cognition, the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept; in an aesthetic respect, however, the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept, but which it applies, not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, for the animation of the cognitive powers, and thus also indirectly to cognitions; thus genius really consists in the happy relation, which no science can teach and no diligence learn, of finding ideas for a given concept on the one hand and on the other hitting upon the **expression** for these, through which the subjective disposition of the mind that is thereby produced, as an accompaniment of a concept, can be communicated to others. The latter talent is really that which is called spirit, for to express what is unnameable in the mental state in the case of a certain representation and to make it universally communicable, whether the expression consist in language, or painting, or in plastic art – that requires a faculty for apprehending the rapidly passing play of the imagination and unifying it into a concept (which for that very reason is original and at the same time discloses a new rule, which could not have been deduced from any antecedent principles or examples), which can be communicated without the constraint of rules.^a

[. . .]

§ 53

Comparison of the Aesthetic Value of the Beautiful Arts with each Other

The **art of poetry** (which owes its origin almost entirely to genius, and will be guided least by precept or example) claims the highest rank of all.³² It expands the mind by setting the imagination free and presenting, within the limits of a given concept and among the unbounded manifold of forms possibly agreeing with it, the one that connects its presentation with a fullness of thought to which no linguistic expression is fully adequate,

and thus elevates itself aesthetically to the level of ideas. It strengthens the mind by letting it feel its capacity^b to consider and judge of nature, as appearance, freely, self-actively, and independently of determination by nature, in accordance with points of view that nature does not present by itself in experience either for sense or for the understanding, and thus to use it for the sake of and as it were as the schema of the supersensible. It plays with the illusion which it produces at will, yet without thereby being deceitful; for it itself declares its occupation to be mere play, which can nevertheless be purposively employed by the understanding for its own business. – Rhetoric, insofar as by that is understood the art of persuasion, i.e., of deceiving by means of beautiful illusion (as an *ars oratoria*), and not merely skill in speaking (eloquence and style), is a dialectic, which borrows from the art of poetry only as much as is necessary to win minds over to the advantage of the speaker before they can judge^d and to rob them of their freedom; thus it cannot be recommended either for the courtroom or for the pulpit. For when it is a matter of civil laws concerning the rights of individual persons, or of the lasting instruction and determination of minds to correct knowledge and conscientious observation of their duty, then it is beneath the dignity of such an important business to allow even a trace of exuberance of wit and imagination to be glimpsed, let alone of the art of persuasion and taking someone in for the advantage of someone else.^e For even if it can sometimes be applied to purposes that are in themselves legitimate and praiseworthy, it is nevertheless still objectionable that the maxims and dispositions be subjectively corrupted in this way, even if the deed is objectively lawful: for it is not enough to do what is right, but it is also to be performed solely on the ground that it is right. [. . .]

After poetry, I would, **if what is at issue is charm and movement of the mind**, place that which comes closest to it among the arts of speech and may also very naturally be united with it,

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^bVermögen.

^czu beurtheilen.

^dvor der Beurtheilung.

^eIn the first edition, this period was a comma, and the sentence continued, “which, even though ...”

^aThe words “of rules” were added in the second edition.

namely **the art of tone**. For, although of course it speaks through mere sensations without concepts, and hence does not, like poetry, leave behind something for reflection, yet it moves the mind in more manifold and, though only temporarily, in deeper ways; but it is, to be sure, more enjoyment than culture (the play of thought that is aroused by it in passing is merely the effect of an as it were mechanical association); and it has, judged^a by reason, less value than any other of the beautiful arts. Hence it demands, like any other enjoyment, frequent change, and cannot bear frequent repetition without inducing antipathy. Its charm, which can be communicated so universally, seems to rest on this: that every expression of language has, in context, a tone that is appropriate to its sense; that this tone more or less designates an affect of the speaker and conversely also produces one in the hearer, which then in turn arouses in the latter the idea that is expressed in the language by means of such a tone; and that, just as modulation is as it were a language of sensations universally comprehensible to every human being, the art of tone puts that language into practice for itself alone, in all its force, namely as a language of the affects, and so, in accordance with the law of association, universally communicates the aesthetic ideas that are naturally combined with it; however, since those aesthetic ideas are not concepts nor determinate thoughts, the form of the composition of these sensations (harmony and melody) serves only, instead of the form of a language, to express, by means of a proportionate disposition of them (which, since in the case of tones it rests on the relation of the number of the vibrations of the air in the same time, insofar as the tones are combined at the same time or successively, can be mathematically subsumed under certain rules), the aesthetic ideas of a coherent whole of an unutterable fullness of thought, corresponding to a certain theme, which constitutes the dominant affect in the piece. On this mathematical form, although not represented by determinate concepts, alone depends the satisfaction that the mere reflection on such a multitude of sensations accompanying or following one another connects with this play of them as a condition of its beauty valid for

everyone; and it is in accordance with it alone that taste may claim for itself a right to pronounce beforehand about the judgment of everyone.

However, mathematics certainly has not the least share in the charm and the movement of the mind that music produces; rather, it is only the indispensable condition (*conditio sine qua non*) of that proportion of the impressions, in their combination as well as in their alternation, by means of which it becomes possible to grasp them together and to prevent them from destroying one another, so that they instead agree in a continuous movement and animation of the mind by means of consonant affects and hereby in a comfortable self-enjoyment.

If, on the contrary, one estimates the value of the beautiful arts in terms of the culture that they provide for the mind and takes as one's standard the enlargement of the faculties that must join together in the power of judgment for the sake of cognition, then to that extent music occupies the lowest place among the beautiful arts (just as it occupies perhaps the highest place among those that are estimated according to their agreeableness), because it merely plays with sensations. The pictorial arts therefore far surpass it in this respect; for while they set the imagination into a free play that is nevertheless also suitable for the understanding, at the same time they conduct a business by bringing about a product that serves the concepts of the understanding as an enduring and self-recommending vehicle for its unification with sensibility and thus as it were for promoting the urbanity of the higher powers of cognition. The two sorts of arts take completely different paths: the former from sensations to indeterminate ideas, the latter, however, from determinate ideas to sensations. The latter are of **lasting** impression, the former only of a **transitory** one. The imagination can recall the former and agreeably entertain itself with them; but the latter are either entirely extinguished or, if they are involuntarily recalled by the imagination, are burdensome rather than agreeable to us. Further, there is a certain lack of urbanity in music, in that, primarily because of the character of its instruments, it extends its influence further (into the neighborhood) than is required, and so as it were imposes itself, thus interfering with the freedom of others, outside of the musical circle, which the arts that speak to the eyes do not do, since one need only turn one's eyes

^a*beurtheilt*.

away if one would not admit their impression. It is almost the same here as in the case of the delight from a widely pervasive smell. Someone who pulls his perfumed handkerchief out of his pocket treats everyone in the vicinity to it against their will, and forces them, if they wish to breathe, to enjoy it at the same time; hence it has also gone out of fashion. – Among the pictorial arts, I would give the palm to **painting**, partly because, as the art of drawing, it is the basis of all the other pictorial arts, partly because it can penetrate much further into the region of ideas and also expand the field of intuition in accordance with these much further than is possible for the rest.

[...]

Second Section

The Dialectic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment

[...]

§ 59

On Beauty as a Symbol of Morality

To demonstrate the reality of our concepts, intuitions are always required. If they are empirical concepts, then the latter are called **examples**. If they are pure concepts of the understanding, then the latter are called **schemata**. But if one demands that the objective reality of the concepts of reason, i.e., of the ideas, be demonstrated, and moreover for the sake of theoretical cognition of them, then one desires something impossible, since no intuition adequate to them can be given at all.

All **hypotyposis** (presentation, *subjecto sub adspectum*), as making something sensible, is of one of two kinds: either **schematic**, where to a concept grasped by the understanding the corresponding intuition is given *a priori*; or **symbolic**, where to a concept which only reason can think, and to which no sensible intuition can be adequate, an intuition is attributed with which the power of judgment proceeds in a way merely analogous to that which it observes in schematization, i.e., it is merely the rule of this procedure, not of the intuition itself, and thus merely the form of the reflection, not the content, which corresponds to the concept.

The use of the word **symbolic** in contrast to the **intuitive** kind of representation has, of course, been accepted by recent logicians, but this is a distorted and incorrect use of the word: for the symbolic is merely a species of the intuitive.¹ The latter, namely (the intuitive), can be divided into the **schematic** and the **symbolic** kinds of representation. Both are hypotyposes, i.e., presentations (*exhibitiones*):^a not mere **characterizations**, i.e., designations of the concepts by means of accompanying sensible signs, which contain nothing at all belonging to the intuition of the object, but only serve them, in accordance with the laws of association of the imagination, and hence in a subjective regard, as a means of reproduction; such things are either words, or visible (algebraic, even mimetic) signs, as mere **expressions** for concepts.*

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All intuitions that are ascribed to concepts *a priori* are thus either **schemata** or **symbols**, the first of which contain direct, the second indirect presentations of the concept. The first do this demonstratively, the second by means of an analogy (for which empirical intuitions are also employed), in which the power of judgment performs a double task, first applying the concept to the object of a sensible intuition, and then, second, applying the mere rule of reflection on that intuition to an entirely different object, of which the first is only the symbol. Thus a monarchical state is represented by a body with a soul if it is ruled in accordance with laws internal to the people, but by a mere machine (like a handmill) if it is ruled by a single absolute will, but in both cases it is represented only **symbolically**. For between a despotic state and a handmill there is, of course, no similarity, but there is one between the rule for reflecting on both and their causality. This business has as yet been little discussed, much as it deserves a deeper investigation; but this is not the place to dwell on it. Our language is full of such indirect presentations, in accordance with an analogy, where the expression does not contain the actual schema for the concept but only a symbol for

¹The intuitive in cognition must be contrasted to the discursive (not the symbolic). Now the former is either **schematic**, by means of **demonstration**, or **symbolic**, as a representation based on mere **analogy**.

^aIn the first edition, *exhibitio* in the singular.

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reflection. Examples are the words **ground**^a (support, basis), **depend**^b (be held from above), from which **flow** (instead of follow), **substance** (as Locke expresses it: the bearer of accidents),² and innumerable other nonschematic but symbolic hypotypes and expressions for concepts not by means of a direct intuition, but only in accordance with an analogy with it, i.e., the transportation of the reflection on one object of intuition to another, quite different concept, to which perhaps no intuition can ever directly correspond. If one may already call a mere kind of representation cognition (which is certainly permissible if it is a principle not of the theoretical determination of what an object is in itself, but of the practical determination of what the idea of it ought to be for us and for the purposive use of it), then all of our cognition of God is merely symbolic, and anyone who takes it, along with the properties of understanding, will, etc., which prove their objective reality only in beings within the world,^c as schematic, lapses into anthropomorphism, just as, if he leaves out everything intuitive, he lapses into deism, by which nothing at all, not even from a practical point of view, is cognized.³

Now I say that the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good, and also that only in this respect (that of a relation that is natural to everyone, and that is also expected of everyone else as a duty) does it please with a claim to the assent^d of everyone else, in which the mind is at the same time aware of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere receptivity for a pleasure from sensible impressions, and also esteems the value of others in accordance with a similar maxim of their power of judgment. That is the **intelligible**, toward which, as the preceding paragraph^e indicated, taste looks, with which, namely, even our higher faculties of cognition agree, and without which glaring contradictions would emerge between their nature and the claims that taste makes. In this faculty the power of judgment does not see itself, as is otherwise the case in empirical judging,^f as subjected to a heteronomy

of the laws of experience; in regard to the objects of such a pure satisfaction it gives the law to itself, just as reason does with regard to the faculty of desire; and it sees itself, both on account of this inner possibility in the subject as well as on account of the outer possibility of a nature that corresponds to it, as related to something in the subject itself and outside of it, which is neither nature nor freedom, but which is connected with the ground of the latter, namely the supersensible, in which the theoretical faculty is combined with the practical, in a mutual and unknown way, to form a unity. We will adduce several aspects of this analogy, while at the same time not leaving unnoticed its differences.⁴

1) The beautiful pleases **immediately** (but only in reflecting intuition, not, like morality, in the concept). 2) It pleases **without any interest** (the morally good is of course necessarily connected with an interest, but not with one that precedes the judgment on the satisfaction, but rather with one that is thereby first produced). 3) The freedom of the imagination (thus of the sensibility of our faculty) is represented in the judging of⁵ the beautiful as in accord with the lawfulness of the understanding (in the moral judgment the freedom of the will is conceived as the agreement of the latter with itself in accordance with universal laws of reason). 4) The subjective principle for judging of⁶ the beautiful is represented as **universal**, i.e., valid for everyone, but not as knowable by any universal concept (the objective principle of morality is also declared to be universal, i.e., knowable for all subjects, and at the same time also for all actions of one and the same subject, yet by means of a universal concept). Hence the moral judgment is not only capable of determinate constitutive principles, but is also possible **only** by means of the grounding of its maxims on these principles and their universality.

A regard to this analogy is customary even for the ordinary understanding, and we often designate beautiful objects of nature or of art with names that seem to be grounded in a moral judging.ⁱ We call buildings or trees majestic and

^aGrund.

^babhängen.

^cWeltwesen.

^dBeistimmung; in the first edition, *Bestimmung* (determination).

^eThat is, § 58.

^fBeurtheilung.

^gBeurtheilung.

^hBeurtheilung.

ⁱBeurtheilung.

magnificent, or fields smiling and joyful; even colors are called innocent, modest or tender, because they arouse sensations that contain something analogical to the consciousness of a mental state produced by moral judgments. Taste as it were makes possible the transition from sensible charm to the habitual moral interest without too violent a leap by representing the imagination even in its freedom as purposively determinable for the understanding and teaching us to find a free satisfaction in the objects of the senses even without any sensible charm.

[. . .]

Notes

"Analytic of the Beautiful" (§§ 1–22)

- 1 Much of the content of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" was developed from 1770 onward in Kant's lectures on logic, where Kant was stimulated by Meier's contrast between logical and aesthetic perfection, and in his lectures on anthropology, which were based on the chapter on empirical psychology in Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* and which responded to Baumgarten's brief presentation of his own aesthetic theory there. References to Kant's early treatments of many of the themes and theses of the "Analytic" will be given in the notes that follow. Kant experimented with a variety of forms for the presentation of this material: see his treatments of the "conditions of taste" in some of the early anthropology lectures, such as *Anthropologie Collins* (1772–73), 25:177–87; *Anthropologie Parow* (also 1772–73), 25:374–80; and *Anthropologie Pillau* (1777–78), 25:778; and in his logic lectures, such as *Wiener Logik* (around 1780), 24:809–10, and the *Jäsche Logik*, which was published in 1800 but was based on much earlier materials (9:39). In Kant's anthropology notes, the earliest note that appears to do anything like sketch out a systematic treatment of taste is R 806, 15:351–8, which could be from as early as 1773–75 but which might also be from as late as the 1780s. Among Kant's logic notes, one that attempts to use the four headings of quality, relation, quantity, and modality (in that order) to organize a treatment of taste is R 1918, 16:156–7, which might be from the 1780s but could be as early as 1776–79.
- 2 The argument that aesthetic judgments concern the relation of objects to the human subject rather than properties of the objects themselves, that feelings of pleasure and displeasure express this relation, and that aesthetic judgments therefore concern the pleasure or displeasure that the perception of objects produce in us is the chronological as well as logical starting point of Kant's analysis of aesthetic judgments, and was present in his comments on aesthetics from the outset to the end. See R 630 (1769), 15:274; R 1780 (1764–68?), 16:112; R 1790 (1769–70), 16:116; R 1809–10 (1769–70), 16:123–4; *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764), 2:207; *Logik Blomberg* (1770–71), 25:44; *Logik Philippi*, 24:344–5, 358; *Jäsche Logik*, 9:36–7; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:66; *Anthropologie Parow*, 25:289; *Anthropologie Mrongovius* (1784–85), 25:1315–16; *Metaphysik L₁* (mid-1770s), 28:245–7; *Metaphysik L₂* (1790–91?), 28:586; and *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:211–12n.
- 3 In the first draft of the introduction (20:230–1), Kant held that the feelings of pleasure and displeasure could not be analyzed, but could be characterized only by their effects, the desire to remain in a pleasurable state or to remove oneself from an unpleasant one. In a large number of other passages, however, Kant explained pleasure as the feeling that expresses a condition that promotes life and its activity, while the feeling of displeasure expresses a hindrance to life or a check to its activity; this conception is presupposed by Kant's conception of the pleasure in the free play of the cognitive faculties, especially at § 9, 5:219 below. See R 567 (1776–78), 15:246; R 586 (1775–78?), 15:252; R 1838 (1773–75), 16:133; R 1839 (1773–78), 16:133; *Logik Blomberg*, 24:45; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:167–8, 181; *Anthropologie Friedländer* (1775–76), 25:526, 559–61; *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:786; *Menschenkunde* (1781–82), 25:1068; *Anthropologie Busolt* (1788–89), 15:1501; *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 60, 7:231; *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:247; *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:891; and *Metaphysik L₂*, 28:586.
- 4 The thesis that the pleasure which is the basis of the judgment of taste is pleasure not in the existence but in the representation of its object is also an early and constant theme in Kant's thought. See R 550 (1776–78), 15:239; R 557 (1780s? 1776–79), 15:240–1, which is one of the few places where Kant helpfully explains that what he means by pleasure independent of the existence of an object is pleasure not dependent on the consequences of that existence; R 988 (1783–84),

- 15:432–3; R 1931 (1790s), 16:160; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:177–8; *Anthropologie Parow*, 25:374; *Anthropologie Friedländer*, 25:577; *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1499, 1508; *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29: 892; *Metaphysik L₂*, 28:586; *Metaphysik K₃* (*Vigilantius*) (1794–95), 29:1009; and *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:211. In several places, Kant adopts the more straightforward view of Shaftesbury that pleasure in beauty is independent of the possession of an object: see R 704 (1771?), 15:312, and *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:877–78, 892–3. (For Shaftesbury's view, see the *Moralists*, part II, section II; in Anthony [Ashley Cooper], Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. John M. Robertson [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964], vol. 2, pp. 126–7.) Finally, Kant occasionally says specifically that beauty is independent of the utility of an object: see R 983 (1776–80s), 15:429, and R 1820a (1771–72), 16:127; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25: 177–8; and *Anthropologie Parow*, 25:374.
- 5 Kant first used this example at *Logik Philippi*, 24:353. Kant apparently drew it from François-Xavier Charlevoix, *Histoire et Description générale de la Nouvelle-France* (Paris, 1744), vol. 3, p. 322: “Iroquois who went to Paris in 1666 and who were shown all the royal houses and all the beauties of this great city admired nothing of this and would have preferred the villages to the capital of the leading monarchy of Europe if they had not seen the Rue de la Huchette, where they were immensely pleased with the grill-stalls that are there festooned with every kind of meat all the time.” An allusion to the anecdote is perhaps also to be found at *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:251.
- 6 This remark has not been traced to any specific passage in Rousseau. But Kant undoubtedly had in mind Rousseau's second discourse, the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* of 1755; see for example note 7, where Rousseau says that the beauties and luxuries of “capital cities” are purchased at the cost of the “abandoned Countryside”; in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 3, edited by Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992), p. 79.
- 7 See R 1796 (1769–70), 16:118; R 1891 (1776–78?), 16:150; *Logik Philippi*, 24:346–51, especially p. 348; and *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1508.
- 8 To this paragraph, compare *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:176; *Logik Philippi*, 24:246; *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:252; *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:891–2; and *Metaphysik Dohna* (1792–93), 28:676.
- 9 The tripartite division of kinds of pleasure that Kant establishes in this section was another early and constant theme in his thought. See Kant's famous letter to Marcus Herz of 21 February 1771, 10:129–35, at p. 129; R 673 (1769–70), 15:298–9; R 681 (1769–70), 15:303; R 712 (1771?), 15:316; R 715 (1771?), 15:317; R 806 (1776–80s), 15:251–8, at p. 351; R 989 (1785–89?), 15:433–4; R 1487 (1776–78), 15:717–26, at p. 724; R 1512 (1780–88), 15:634–8, at p. 836; R 1513 (1780–88), 15:838–43, at p. 838; *Logik Philippi*, 24:246; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:167; *Anthropologie Parow*, 25:367; *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:788–9; *Menschenkunde*, 25:1095; *Anthropologie Mrongovius*, 25:1316, 1332; *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:248–50; and *Metaphysik L₂*, 28:586. For a general account of the concepts of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, see *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:890–1.
- 10 For Kant's claim that there are not phenomenologically different kinds of pleasure or displeasure but rather different relations of feelings of pleasure or displeasure to their objects, see *Practical Reason*, 5:23, and R 1488 (1775–77), 15:726–9.
- 11 For similar formulations, see R 1829 (1772–5), 16:130–1; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:167; *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:250, and *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:892–3.
- 12 See *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:175; *Menschenkunde*, 25:1108; and *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1513.
- 13 Kant paraphrased this definition at *Metaphysik K₃* (*Vigilantius*), 29:1011.
- 14 That the judgment of taste is a universally valid judgment about the pleasure produced in the human subject by an object, and beauty that in virtue of which an object produces a universally valid pleasure, was also part of Kant's thinking about aesthetics from the outset. See: R 627 (1769? 1770?), 15:273; R 640 (1769), 15:280–2; R 647 (1769–70), 15:284; R 686 (1769–70), 15:306; R 721 (1771), 15:319; R 1793 (1769–70), 16:117; R 1850 (1776–78), 16:137; R 1854 (1776–78), 16:137; R 1872 (1776–78), 16:145; *Logik Philippi*, 24:346–7; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:180–1, 197; *Anthropologie Parow*, 25:376, 378, 390; *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:788; *Menschenkunde* 25:1060–1, 1095–6; *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1509; *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 67, 7:240; *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:249, 251–3; *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:892–3.
- 15 For specific contrasts between the idiosyncratic validity of judgments of agreeableness and the universal validity of judgments of beauty, see *Logik Philippi*, 24:346–7; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:181; *Menschenkunde*, 25:1095; *Anthropologie Mrongovius*, 25:1325; *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:248, 250–1,

- 253; and *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:891–2. An interesting variant of the claim is found at *Menschenkunde*, 25:1108, where Kant says that the agreeable has the approval of some, the beautiful, that of more, and the good, that of all. See also *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1513.
- 16 See the first introduction, 20:224, and note 16 thereto.
- 17 For the distinction between objective and subjective universal validity, see R 993 (1785–89), 15:437; R 1820 (1771–73), 16:127; and *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:49, 252–3.
- 18 For a striking variation on this theme, see *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 67, 7:241, where Kant describes the judgment of beauty as an invitation (*Einladung*) to others to experience the pleasure one has oneself felt in an object.
- 19 See *Menschenkunde*, 25:1097, and *Anthropologie Mrongovius*, 25:1326.
- 20 This sentence appears to assert that it is the universal communicability of a feeling, or even the fact of our actual agreement about it, that causes our pleasure in it, rather than that a feeling of pleasure produced by the free play of imagination and understanding in the way that Kant described in the introduction, Section VIII, and is about to describe again. This is not an isolated claim, but one that can be found in a number of Kant's earlier comments, e.g., R 653 (1769–70), 15:289; R 683 (1769–70), 15:304–5; R 701 (1770–71), 15:310–11; R 1791 (1769–70), 16:116; *Logik Blomberg*, 24:45–6; *Logik Philippi*, 24:353–5; *Anthropologie Collins*, 15:179–80; and *Metaphysik L₁*, 28:250–1. Even in the published *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant explains the pleasure in the beautiful as pleasure in the fact of agreement with others; see § 69, 7:244; likewise, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:212. A rare note in which Kant clearly says that pleasure in a universally “communicable movement of the cognitive powers” is the basis for a judgment of taste without saying that the pleasure is in the fact of this communicability is R 988 (1783–84), 15:432–3. In *Anthropologie Mrongovius*, which is from around the same time, Kant also argues that our “inclination to taste” (*Geschmacksneigung*) is strengthened by society without saying that the pleasurable (actually, *Annehmlichkeit*, or “agreeableness”) of taste is a product of society; see 25:1326.
- 21 See R 1812a (1770–71), 16:125; R 1841 (1773–78), 16:134–5; and R 1845 (1776–78), 16:135.
- 22 For the numerous antecedents to this passage, see note 15 to the first draft of the introduction and note 18 to the published version of the introduction.
- 23 By this reference to “the critique” Kant clearly means the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For the schematism, see A 137–47/B 176–87.
- 24 On pleasure as the feeling of life or animation, see note 3 to § 1 above.
- 25 In the 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, Kant said that the sublime “moves” (*rührt*) us while the beautiful “charms” (*reizt*) us (2:209). This is clearly the precursor of a claim like that in the “General Remark” following § 29 of the present work, where he says that “The beautiful prepares us to love something, even nature, without interest; the sublime, to esteem it, even contrary to our (sensible) interest” (5:267). But Kant quickly came to reject the characterization of beauty as “charming,” and he took great pains to distinguish the beautiful from the charming from 1769 on. See R 1789 (1769–70), 16:115; R 1806 (1769–70), 16:122; R 1864 (1776–78), 16:140; R 1868 (1776–78), 16:143–4; R 1898 (1776–79), 16:152; *Logik Philippi*, 24:349–51; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:178–9, 184–5, 196–7; *Menschenkunde*, 25:1098–9; *Anthropologie Mrongovius*, 25:1332; *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1509; and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 67, 7:241.
- 26 Up to this point, Kant has argued that our pleasure in the beautiful is a response to the form of purposiveness, or the appearance of purposiveness in the absence of a concept of a specific purpose served by an object. Only at this point does he reverse his formula and assert that beauty is purposiveness of form, where form is to be understood in ordinary spatiotemporal terms. Perhaps because the second thesis is introduced into the argument in this less than explicit manner, Kant does not pause to offer any proper definition of form. In addition to the general definition of form in *Pure Reason*, A 20/B 34, there is a definition of form as “the way in which free (productive) imagination arranges this matter [of sensation] inventively” in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 67, 7:240–1. That passage immediately goes on to claim that “only form can lay claim to a universal rule for the feeling of pleasure”; other passages that assert the universal validity of pleasure in response to form include R 627 (1769? 1770?), 15:273; R 672 (1769–70), 15:298; R 1796 (1769–70), 16:118–19; R 1891 (1776–78?), 16:150; *Logik Philippi* 24:348, 351, 360; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:181; *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:893; and *Metaphysik K₃* (*Vigilantius*), 28:1010–12.
- 27 Kant attacks an inclination to strong impressions of color as a sign of poor taste in R 713 (1771?), 15:316.

- 28 Kant also mentions the example of architecture in *Anthropologie* Collins 25:189 (actually an insertion from another transcription, *Hamilton*).
- 29 There are not many precursors to this distinction in Kant's earlier notes and lectures. One exception is R 639 (1769), 15:276–9, which distinguishes between “the sensibly beautiful” (*das sinnliche Schöne*), which is defined as “a play of sensation or a form of intuition (immediate),” and “the self-sufficient beauty” (*selbstständige Schönheit*), defined as “a means to the concept of the good.” Kant also uses the term “self-sufficient beauty” in R 1814 (1770–71), 16:124. But in both of these passages what Kant calls “self-sufficient beauty” seems more like what he here calls adherent or dependent beauty rather than free beauty. See also *Anthropologie* Parow, 25:383–4.
- 30 The phrase “à la grecque” was used to refer to the neoclassical style in architecture and interior decoration that became popular in the second half of the eighteenth century, especially after the beginning of excavations at Pompeii in 1748.
- 31 At a number of places in his lectures, Kant says that beauty must be distinguished from usefulness but must also be compatible with the usefulness of an object. See *Menschenkunde*, 25:1100–1; *Anthropologie* Mrongovius, 25:332; and *Anthropologie* Busolt, 25:1510.
- 32 Kant reiterates this definition at *Metaphysik* K₃ (*Vigilantius*), 29:1011.
- 33 See *Logik* Philippi, 24:347, and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 67, 7:240.
- 34 That aesthetic judgment must be based on exemplary models rather than rules was a constant theme in Kant's notes and lectures: see R 1823 (1772–75), 16:129; R 1851 and 1853 (1776–78), 16:137; R 1869 (1776–78), 16:144; *Logik* Blomberg, 24:46; *Logik* Philippi, 24:349; and *Wiener Logik*, 24: 807, 812. See also § 47.
- 35 In the Aristotelian tradition, the *sensus communis* was regarded as the mental faculty that recognizes that representations supplied by the different senses belong to a common object. In the Cartesian tradition, and to this extent Kant certainly belongs to the latter, this recognition would require a concept of an object – in Kant's case, the categories or concepts of pure understanding would supply the framework for such a concept. Anyone making a cognitive judgment about an object is bringing these concepts to bear on his sensory inputs, whether he is aware of this or not. Thus even the most common cognitive experience depends upon concepts.
- 36 The idea of a common sense first appears in Kant's treatments of aesthetics at *Menschenkunde*, 25:1095.
- 37 Kant introduces the distinction between the reproductive and productive (syntheses of) imagination in the transcendental deduction of the categories in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*; see A 100–2 and A 118.
- 38 For similar language, see R 1923 (1780s?), 16:158, and R 1935 (1790s), 16:161–2; see also *Metaphysik* Dohna, 28:675–6.

“Analytic of the Sublime” (§§ 23–29)

- 1 Kant followed the British tradition in distinguishing between the beautiful and the sublime in his 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*; but this work focuses on issues such as the differences in the responses to the beautiful and sublime between the genders, different nations, etc., and has little to offer by way of detailed analysis of either the beautiful or the sublime (see also *Logik* Blomberg, 24:47). Because Baumgarten did not address the sublime in his chapter on empirical psychology in the *Metaphysica*, Kant had far less to say about the sublime than about the beautiful in his anthropology lectures and the notes for them, so we have fewer sources for the development of his views on the sublime than for his views on the beautiful. Moreover, when he did address the sublime, Kant often said that because the sublime moves us or stirs our emotions, it is not the subject of an objective and universally valid judgment like the beautiful: see *Anthropologie* Collins, 25:198; *Anthropologie* Parow, 25:388–9, 391; and even *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 67, 7:241. The first of the anthropology notes that clearly reveal Kant's intention to organize the “Critique of Aesthetic Judgment” around the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime are R 992 and 993, 15:436–9; both of these notes are from the late 1780s.
- 2 See note 3 to § 1 of the “Analytic of the Beautiful,” above.
- 3 For the complex character of the feeling of respect, see *Practical Reason*, 5:72–3.
- 4 It may sometimes seem as if Kant holds that only objects in nature may produce the experience of the sublime, but this passage at least tacitly acknowledges that there can be at least a representation of the sublime in art. See also *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 68, 7:243.
- 5 See also *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 68, 7:242, where Kant draws this distinction as that between responses to size and to intensity.

Deduction and Theory of Fine Art (§§ 30–53 and remark)

- 1 The “Deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding,” or the “Transcendental Deduction,” is at the heart of Kant’s analysis of the conditions of the possibility of experience in the first *Critique*. The part of the work which Kant himself said cost him the most effort (A xvi), the deduction, which is found at A 84–130 in the first edition (1781), was extensively rewritten for the second edition (1787); see B 116–169. Kant’s aims and success in the deduction of the categories have remained highly controversial; for a survey of some of the problems, see Paul Guyer, “The transcendental deduction of the categories,” in Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 123–60.
- 2 This passage clarifies Kant’s earlier claims that judgments of taste are simply *a posteriori*; see, e.g., R 623–4 (1769?), 15:270, and *Logik Philippi*, 24:347. An alternative view, that aesthetic judgments are straightforwardly *a priori*, is suggested at *Menschenkunde*, 25:1097. Kant does not seem to have arrived at the present view that aesthetic judgments have both an *a posteriori* and an *a priori* aspect until writing the third *Critique*.
- 3 See *Menschenkunde*, 25:1095, and *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1480.
- 4 Kant formulates these as “enlightened,” “maxims of reason” and “enlarged thought” quite early; see R 1486 (1775–77), 15:706–16, at p. 715; see also R 1508 (1780–84), 15:820–22, which also catalogues various forms of *Unmündigkeit* (immaturity), and thus looks as if it might have been a study for *What Is Enlightenment?* (1784) (see next note).
- 5 Compare this to Kant’s famous definition of enlightenment as “the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred minority” (*Unmündigkeit*), where Kant emphasizes that enlightenment depends on the “use of one’s own understanding without direction from another”; *What Is Enlightenment?*, 8:35.
- 6 Kant makes a stronger claim in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* when he says that “choice in terms of this satisfaction [of taste] comes, according to its form, under the principle of duty” (§ 69, 7:244).
- 7 Kant actually formulated this thought quite early; see R 1820a (1771–2), where he wrote that “Beautiful things indicate that the human being fits into the world” (16:127).
- 8 This section follows the preceding ones without any indication of a major break in the text, but it is clear that Kant is now changing the subject,

since he has previously been discussing the interest in natural rather than artistic beauty but next turns to give his theory of art in the next dozen sections. It is not at all clear that these sections should be regarded as a continuation of the “Deduction of Pure Judgments of Taste”; perhaps by dropping the heading “Third Book” above § 30, where the deduction began, Kant meant to lessen the impression that the topic of the following sections is continuous with that of the preceding ones.

- 9 See R 1892 (1776–78), 16:150, where Kant uses a similar formulation. See also R 2704 (1776–1780s), 16:477, where Kant even suggests that the word *Kunst* (art) comes from *können* (to be able), as well as, from the same period, R 2707, 16:478.
- 10 Pieter Camper (1728–1789), Dutch anatomist and naturalist. Kant refers to his *Abhandlung über die beste Forme der Schuhe* (Treatise on the best forms for shoes) (Berlin, 1783).
- 11 On the contrast between art and crafts, see R 963 (1776–78), 15:464; R 1866, 16:142–3; *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:783; and *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1493; on the contrast between liberal art and arts for remuneration (*Brodkunst*, literally “art for bread”), see R 2026 (1776–78?), 16:201; and on the concept of the liberal arts more generally, see R 2025 (1776–1780s), 16:200–1.
- 12 See R 626 (1769?), 15:271–3, at p. 272, and *Logik Philippi*, 24:344.
- 13 This phrase (*schöne Wissenschaften*) was customary at least within German academic aesthetics, as for example in the title of the work by Georg Friedrich Meier (1718–1777), the chief disciple and popularizer of Baumgarten, *Die Anfangsgründe aller schönen Künste und Wissenschaften* (Halle, 1748–50).
- 14 Compare R 1485 (1775–77), 15:699–706, at p. 701, and *Menschenkunde*, 25:983, 997.
- 15 See R 962 (1776–78), 15:423–4; R 1855 (1776–78), 16:138; R 1888 (1776–78), 16:149; *Menschenkunde*, 25:1011; and *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1511.
- 16 Genius was a standard subject in all of Kant’s anthropology lectures: See *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:167–70; *Anthropologie Friedländer*, 25:556–7; *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:781–4; *Menschenkunde*, 15:1055–1066; *Anthropologie Mrongovius*, 25:1310–15; and *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1492–9. See also *Logik Philippi*, 24:370; and among numerous reflections, R 899 (1776–78), 15:393; R 921, 921a and 922 (1776–78?), 15:406–11; R 1509 and 1510 (1781–84), 15:823–9; R 1788 (1766–68?), 16:114; and R 1847 (1776–78), 16:136.
- 17 Kant emphasizes this contrast as early as 1769 at R 621, 15:268–9; see also R 778 (1772–73), 16:340–1; R 812 (1773–75?), 75:360–1; R 922 (1776–78),

- 15:409–11; *Anthropologie Friedländer*, 25:556–7; *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:783–4; and *Menschenkunde*, 25:1056.
- 18 This contrast between the teachable skills of science and the unteachable talent for genius was a frequent theme in Kant's anthropology lectures: see *Anthropologie Friedländer*, 25:556–7; *Menschenkunde*, 25:1061; *Anthropologie Mrongovius*, 25:1310–11; and *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1493–4. See also R 932 (1776–78), 15:413.
- 19 Here Kant refers to the *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (Mathematical principles of natural philosophy) published by Isaac Newton (1646–1727) in 1687, in which Newton unified terrestrial and celestial mechanics with his famous axiomatization of the laws of motion.
- 20 Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), educator and man of letters, friend of Goethe and Herder, editor of the influential magazine *Die Teutsche Merkur* from 1773–90; considered along with Klopstock and Lessing one of the most important writers of early German classicism. He remains best known for his novel *The History of Agathon* (1766–67), the first German *Bildungsroman* (novel of an education or character-formation), which became the model for Goethe's two *Wilhelm Meister* books, Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, and many others, and for the epic *Oberon* (1780). A recent selection of Wieland's critical and theoretical writings is *Freiheit in der Literatur* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1997). Wieland's daughter married Kant's supporter Karl Leonhard Reinhold, and Reinhold became associate editor of *Die Teutsche Merkur*, publishing there his important *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* (Letters on the Kantian philosophy) in 1786–87, which greatly assisted the spread of Kant's philosophy.
- 21 For this contrast, see R 920 (1776–78), 15:405.
- 22 See R 2569 (1769–70?), 16:420–4.
- 23 See R 924 (1776–78), 15:411.
- 24 See *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1494–5.
- 25 See R 1816 and 1818 (1770–71?), 16:126; R 1830 (1772–78), 16:131; R 1935 (1790s), 16:161–2; *Logik Blomberg*, 24:50; *Logik Philippi*, 24:356–7; *Anthropologie Collins* (insert from *Hamilton*), 25:183; and *Anthropologie Parow*, 25:379.
- 26 Here Kant appears to allude to the argument of Lessing's *Laokoön* (1766), which holds that pain or other forms of ugliness can be described in poetry but not represented directly in painting or sculpture, because beauty is the “first law” of the visual arts (see chapter 2 in *Laokoön*).
- 27 A large number of texts shed light on what Kant means by “spirit” (*Geist*). See R 817 (1776–78?), 15:364–5; R 933 and 934 (1776–78), 15:414–15; R 926 (1776–78), 15:412; R 932–4 (1776–78), 15:413–15; R 946 (1776–78? 1772?), 16:418; R 943 (1776–78), 15:418–19; R 958 (1776–78), 15:422; R 1485 (1775–77), 16:699–706; R 1824–5 (1772–78), 16:129–30; R 1834 (1772–78), 16:132; R 1844 (1776–78), 16:135; R 1847 (1776–78), 16:136; R 1894 (1776–78?), 16:151; *Anthropologie Collins*, 25:167; *Anthropologie Friedländer*, 25:557; *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:782–3; and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 71B, 7:246.
- 28 See, *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:782, and *Anthropologie Busolt*, 25:1494.
- 29 In what follows, Kant gives a German prose translation of these lines by Friedrich II (Frederick the Great) of Prussia:
- Oui, finissons sans trouble, et mourons
sans regrets,
En laissant l'Univers comblé de nos
bienfaits.
Ainsi l'Astre du jour, au bout de sa carrière,
Répand sur l'horizon une douce lumière,
Et les derniers rayons qu'il darde dans les air
Sont les derniers soupirs qu'il donne à
l'Univers.
- Our text translates Kant's German rather than the French, which he does not himself supply. The lines are the conclusion of Friedrich's poem *Au Maréchal Keith, Imitation du troisième livre de Lucrèce*: “Sur les vaines terreurs de la mort et les frayeurs d'une autre vie” (To Marshal Keith, imitation of the third book of Lucretius, “On the vain terrors of death and fears of another life”); the poem may be found in *Poésies diverses*, epître XVIII (Berlin: 1762), vol. 2, p. 447, or *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand* (1846), vol. 10, p. 203.
- 30 From the *Akademischen Gedichten* (Academic poems) of Philipp Lorenz Withof, in *Sinnlichen Ergötzungen* (Sensory delights) (Leipzig, 1782), vol. 1, p. 70. Withof (1725–1789), was a professor of medicine in Duisburg and Bergsteinfurt, then professor of history, oratory, and morals in the gymnasium of Hamm and then again at the university in Duisburg. Properly quoted, the line is “The sun streamed forth, as tranquility flows from goodness” (*Die Sonne quoll hervor, wie Ruh' aus Güte quillt*).
- 31 Kant refers to the frontispiece to *Einleitung in die Naturlehre* (1754) by Johann Andreas Segner (1704–1777), Göttingen physicist and mathematician.
- 32 See *Anthropologie Pillau*, 25:761, and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, § 71B, 7:247–9.

"Dialectic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment"
(§§ 55–60)

- 1 The contrast between intuitive and symbolic cognition was introduced into German philosophy by Leibniz in his "Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas" (1684). Symbolic knowledge uses words or other signs "(whose sense appears only obscurely and imperfectly to the mind) in place of the ideas I have of those things"; knowledge is intuitive, "When we can, or indeed insofar as we can ... consider all of its component notions at the same time" (G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. and tr. by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1989], p. 25). See also Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt, and die Seele des Menschen*, §§ 316–24.
- 2 See John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, book II, chapter XXIII, § 2; in the edition by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 295–6.
- 3 For Kant's definition of theism, see *Philosophische Religionslehre nach Pölitz*, 28:1001; translated in Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. George Di Giovanni

and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 347–8; on anthropomorphism, see *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 6:65n. (Di Giovanni and Wood, p. 107) and 6:168–9 (Di Giovanni and Wood, p. 189), and *Pölitz*, 28:1002 (Di Giovanni and Wood, p. 348) and 28:1046–7 (Di Giovanni and Wood, p. 385–6).

- 4 At the beginning of the *Anthropologie Collins*, Kant had bluntly asserted that "The entire utility of the beautiful arts is that they set moral propositions of reason in their full glory and powerfully support them" (25:33). However, later in the same lectures Kant already introduced the idea that there is at most an analogy between taste and virtue: "Virtue engages us, not through its use, but insofar as it pleases us. In such a way taste prepares the way for virtue. Taste is an *analogon* of perfection, it is in intuition what morality is in reason. The study of taste is therefore very necessary" (25:195–6). See also *Anthropologie Parow*, 25:387, and *Menschenkunde*, 25:1104. *Metaphysik Dohna*, 28:676 (delivered after the publication of the *Critique*) gives a good statement of the points of difference between taste and morality mentioned by Kant in the next paragraph.

Part II

Modern Theories

Introduction

Christopher Janaway and Sandra Shapshay

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Immediately after Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790) – commonly regarded as the single most influential work in the field – aesthetics entered one of its most fertile periods. A useful framework for understanding the main trends in the modern period is to categorize the theories as valuing art and aesthetic experience predominantly in one of three ways: (1) for the free-play of the intellectual faculties afforded by aesthetic engagement; (2) for the cognitive value of aesthetic engagement; and (3) for the value of experiencing emotion.¹ While many of the philosophers in this period offer a somewhat pluralistic account of aesthetic value, they do tend to stress one of these values over the others as being essential to art proper and to appropriate aesthetic experience.

Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) stressed both the intrinsic and ultimately moral value of aesthetic free play. Like Kant, Schiller conceives of the most important relationship between aesthetics and morality to be a two-tiered one: it is only by virtue of aesthetic autonomy that aesthetic experience can have real moral value. For Schiller, art has an exalted role in human life because of its freedom from the constraints of moral duty and physical need. Human beings have two essential

drives, the material and the formal, and these are united in a “play drive,” manifest in art which in its freedom succeeds in uniting form and matter. An emphasis on freedom, autonomy, and spontaneity, runs through the main movements of the day: early romanticism and German idealism. These movements saw art as the prime arena for human self-expression and as important in the quest for a problematic union with nature and with society.

The most substantial and enduring contribution to aesthetics from this early period of German idealism was the work of G.W.F. Hegel, principally in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* delivered in the 1820s. The majority of the introduction to these lectures is included in this anthology. In contrast to Schiller, Hegel stresses the cognitive value of art. For Hegel, art does what religion and ultimately philosophy do more perfectly, that is allow humans to attain self-understanding as freely self-determining conscious beings. Art's distinctive manner of achieving this is via the making of sensuous material objects. Hegel is much concerned with beauty, though unlike Kant he excludes from consideration the beauty of nature, because for him philosophy as a whole – and aesthetics in particular – studies the

development of the human mind or reason through history. Hegel's pronouncement that his topic is the "beauty of art" fixes in place the confluence of interests that defined but also bedeviled philosophical aesthetics long afterwards: with the exception of Arthur Schopenhauer, post-Hegelian aestheticians ignored the aesthetics of nature until Ronald Hepburn sparked a revival quite late into the 20th century.

For Hegel, beauty in art is conceived neither in terms of mere form nor principally in terms of its giving pleasure: rather it is "sensuous appearance of the idea," a manifestation of truth through some experienceable medium. Hegel not only gives a thorough systematic account of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry, but provides a unified history of the development of the arts, embracing a wide range of epochs and cultures (including non-Western ones). This historical approach has been vastly influential on the practice of art history and criticism, and indeed on the practice of the arts to this day. Hegel divided the history of art into a pre-classical "symbolic" phase, then the classical phase of the ancient Greeks, which he regarded as superior because of its attainment of unity between content and sensory medium, and a third phase of romanticism which embraced medieval Christian art and the art of modernity. Art had already declined in the modern period, and must end, according to Hegel, superseded by religion and philosophy insofar as they constitute better vehicles for attaining further stages of rational self-consciousness.

Two additional German philosophers of the 19th century produced original aesthetic theories of lasting interest: Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche. In *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) Schopenhauer developed one of the earliest "aesthetic attitude" theories. Aesthetic experience, paradigmatically experience of beauty, is for him a suspension of the will, allowing the subject to enter a higher state of consciousness, freed from personal desire or interest towards the object of contemplation, and free of the suffering that attends willing. This state of peaceful contemplation is of peculiar value to Schopenhauer because of his philosophical pessimism, the view that ordinary human life involves nearly continual striving and suffering for no ultimate purpose. Aesthetic experience is a temporary relief from the misery of an

existence we would prefer not to have if we understood it properly. In addition to this hedonic value, Schopenhauer also attaches to the aesthetic state a supreme cognitive value, in that by freeing ourselves of will we free ourselves of subjective forms and achieve a purer knowledge, which he says is of Ideas, conceived in a Platonic manner. Art – treated here in a resolutely ahistorical manner, in stark contrast to Hegel – is of special value because through the work of a genius, who can suspend individual willing and merely perceive, we are enabled to experience reality more objectively.

In addition to the characterization of the experience of beauty Schopenhauer also gives an account of sublime response, which had long been understood as a mixed painful-pleasurable variety of aesthetic experience. Unlike the case of beautiful objects, sublime objects and environments must be recognized by the subject as bearing a hostile relationship to the "will in general," that is, to the fundamental drives of human beings to preserve their lives, to procreate, and to attain happiness.

Following Kant, Schopenhauer distinguishes two main types of sublime response, the mathematical and the dynamical, based on the nature of the threat posed. Objects of the mathematically sublime sort are vast landscapes such as mountain ranges, an expanse of desert or prairie, and the starry night sky. On the dynamical side are grand forces in nature, a storm at sea, thunderous cascades, lighting storms, and the like. These natural environments and phenomena may be experienced as hostile to the human being either psychologically (mathematical) or existentially (dynamical). If an individual recognizes this hostile relationship, and instead of fleeing the environment or ignoring these thoughts they consciously turn their attention away from the personal threat in order to contemplate peacefully the essential features of that environment, then they are "raised above" their own individuality and experience the feeling of the sublime. For Schopenhauer as it was for Kant, the feeling of the sublime lies precisely in the recognition of the contrast between human insignificance or frailty, on the one hand, and human significance as in some way transcending nature, and as free and powerful, on the other.

Schopenhauer also gives accounts of the distinctive value of the different art forms. Of special

note are his theories of tragedy and music. The high cognitive value of tragedy and its distinctive pleasure, which he claims is the highest degree of the dynamically sublime, renders tragedy the pinnacle of the non-musical arts. Off the scale entirely and more important than all the other arts for Schopenhauer is music. His theory of music holds it as unique among the arts in dispensing with the representation of Platonic Ideas and rather copying directly the movements of the will, of which, according to his metaphysics, the whole of reality consists. Since Schopenhauer understands the experience of (absolute) music as consisting in the experience of universal emotions, however, we can see Schopenhauer as offering a moderately pluralist account of the value of art and aesthetic experience, one that stresses the cognitive and emotional values of art. However, the value of the free-play of the cognitive faculties, which was so important to Kant and Schiller is largely absent from Schopenhauer's picture.

In his early period Nietzsche was influenced by Schopenhauer, but he took seriously the more Hegelian emphasis on the historical development of the arts, imbued his theory with scholarship of the ancient world, and sought to promote the recent oeuvre of Richard Wagner as a model art form. The result of this mixture was Nietzsche's first book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). Nietzsche's central opposition here is between two Greek deities, Apollo and Dionysus, who have complex symbolic significance. Apollo is associated with sun, light, appearance, and clarity, Dionysus with trance, abandon, and ritual dance. Nietzsche takes them to symbolize natural forces or drives whose keywords are *dream* and *intoxication*. We have drives to immerse ourselves in an alternative world of appearance and beauty, and to lose our sense of self in a drunken transport or trance in which we become conscious of an identity with nature as a whole. The plastic arts and music respectively answer to these drives in their purest forms. But Nietzsche's central claim is that in tragic drama of the classical age in Athens these two creative drives became fused so as to create the perfect art form. Tragedy represents the individual in image, but uses the music and dance of the chorus to provide an identification with a greater unity, a viewpoint from which the suffer-

ing and destruction of the individual can be witnessed with fulfillment and joy. Nietzsche pronounces that "it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified," in part because of a pessimism similar to Schopenhauer's: life itself is brief, painful, and ultimately without point, so that only when transfigured by art is it something we can celebrate.

Nietzsche's narrative concludes with the claim that philosophy brought about the death of tragedy through the figure of Socrates, who held an optimistic view of human happiness and devalued anything for which there was not a rational explanation. Nietzsche's unorthodox book, which he himself more or less disowned in later years, was influential in revealing the expressive and irrational in Greek culture. More recently it has attained great resonance in postmodern critiques of traditional philosophy and its treatment of the arts. Nietzsche's work is difficult to characterize with respect to more traditional aesthetic theories of the period, as the value of tragedy for Nietzsche consists not so much in its cognitive value, in the experience of emotion, or in the free-play of the cognitive faculties, but rather in its capacity to help us to affirm life. The later Nietzsche was preoccupied with a critique of post-Christian culture, including its morality, metaphysics, and conception of truth. He produced no other systematic work in aesthetics, but regarded artistic creativity, with its license to form fictions and disregard truth but affirm life, as paradigmatic of autonomous agency and value formation, so that in a sense his moral psychology and theory of value are at the same time contributions to the philosophy of art.

German philosophy continued its tradition of aesthetic theorizing into the 20th century, where it emerged variously in the form of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and Marxism, all of which returned to a stress on the cognitive value of art. A unique body of work arising out of phenomenology is that of Martin Heidegger, whose 1936 essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" is his most studied work in the philosophy of art. Heidegger was influenced by Hegel and Nietzsche, and by his reading of the poet Friedrich Hölderlin. A preoccupation with art as revelatory of truth and frequent reference to Greek paradigms show

continuity with Hegel, but Heidegger invents a quite new way of describing the work of art and what it does. It is for him a fundamental mistake characteristic of modernity to regard the work of art as a thing present in the world; rather, for Heidegger a work of art “opens up a world” and is a “happening of truth.” The being of things in our experience is “unconcealed” by an art work: for example, a Van Gogh painting of peasant shoes allegedly “lets us know what shoes are in truth.” Heidegger makes rich, quasi-poetic use of the concepts “world” and “earth” to convey that which opens itself to us in our lived experience of using “equipment,” and the firm but concealed basis on which human lives are lived. Art is a uniquely revelatory form of *poesis* or “bringing forth” for Heidegger, and fundamentally challenges traditional ontology and the technical conceptions of things that he criticizes in modernity.

The most discussed writers in Marxist theoretical aesthetics are Walter Benjamin, whose essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1935) is especially widely read, and Theodor Adorno, whose later work is woven from many influences apart from Marxism, including Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, 20th-century music – in which he was expert and on which he wrote sophisticated criticism – and aesthetic modernism more generally. Adorno analyzed art works as commodities within Western capitalism, but also saw art as having the potential for an autonomy which enabled “truth content” and a critical standpoint towards society. In his *Aesthetic Theory* (published posthumously in 1970) he adopts a complex dialectical approach, multiplying pairs of opposed concepts to describe art works from many perspectives.

In the English-speaking world the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the prevalence of aestheticism and formalism, reviving the focus on the intrinsic value of intellectual free-play. Formalism in the visual arts was championed by Clive Bell, who in his book *Art* (1914) wrote that art was united by its having “significant form” or a “combination of lines and colours that moves me aesthetically.” In the case of music, formalism had found an earlier proponent in the work of Eduard Hanslick, whose influential book *The Beautiful in Music* (1854) argued that music cannot express or represent emotions and consisted merely of the movement of tonal forms.

Aestheticism arose out of specific artistic preoccupations in Victorian Britain, and is sloganized as the “art for art’s sake” movement, with Oscar Wilde one of its notable proponents. In 1912 Edward Bullough published an influential essay entitled “‘Psychical Distance’ as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle,” in which he characterized the aesthetic attitude, using the central notion of distance, somewhat akin to the notion of disinterestedness that is traced back to Kant. These theories mirrored modernist developments in the various art forms, and reflected a tendency to secure autonomy for art by linking it with a conception of pure aesthetic experience.

Such aesthetic theories had their opponents, who increasingly stressed the emotional value of art in various ways. Most notably perhaps were Leo Tolstoy in *What is Art* (1898) and the American pragmatist John Dewey in *Art as Experience* (1934). Tolstoy rejected much of the celebrated art of his day because it did not fulfill his preferred criterion of communicating moral feeling between human beings. Dewey also accentuated the role of communication and opposed the notion of the single detached subject of aesthetic experience. In a highly developed though recently rather neglected theory, he sought a more comprehensive conception of art, opposing the separation of art from the rest of human experience, and viewing art – conceived more broadly than traditional fine arts – as an activity productive of consummatory experience.

Further developments in the expressivist vein came with R.G. Collingwood who was influenced by the Italian aesthetician Benedetto Croce with whom he is often linked, and Susanne Langer. In *The Principles of Art* (1938) Collingwood presents the view that “art proper” is the expression of emotion. Some activities that are called art Collingwood relegates to the categories of amusement and “magic,” the latter being the arousal of emotions with social usefulness such as solidarity and religious allegiance, while amusement is the arousal of emotions for the sake of simply enjoying them. Collingwood opposes the conception of art as craft or technique of arousing emotions by making representations, and regards representations as inessential to art. Expressing an emotion is quite distinct from arousing it; expression involves the authentic realization, through an artistic medium, of the emotion that one is

feeling, and independently of this there can be no adequate characterization of what the expressed emotion is.

Although pluralists about the value of art and aesthetic experience do not abound in this period of aesthetics, the development of these more monistic free-play, cognitive value, and emotional expression views presented three highly articulated currents for contemporary reflection.

Finally, the “Modern Theories” section ends with selections from Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois who usher in a new attention to the importance of race and racial oppression with respect to art. One of the most important artistic movements in the United States during the 1920s was the “New Negro” movement, named after Locke’s influential 1925 anthology of poetry, essays, music, and portraiture by black and white artists. Later called, the “Harlem Renaissance,” it included major poets and writers such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. This African-American artistic flowering provoked significant controversy over the proper social function of African-American art and literature.

While Du Bois believed that “black art” and artists ought to portray specifically the African-American experience in a manner that would

combat racism, advance progressive politics, and help to “uplift” the African-American man and woman, Locke argued that this prescription was a formula for propaganda, and advocated for black artists to express their own individuality. For Locke, black art at its best should not be separate from the main currents of American art, but should rather participate in the expression of *universal* themes. This controversy between Locke and Du Bois may be seen as the start of the burgeoning contemporary subfield of aesthetics called “black aesthetics”² and constitutes an important debate on the proper relationship between art and politics.

Notes

- 1 In his three-volume *A History of Modern Aesthetics* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), Paul Guyer introduces this framework and further categorizes philosophers as “monists” or “pluralists” insofar as they argue for one or several of these values as the grounds for proper aesthetic engagement. For a synopsis see his “Monism and Pluralism in the History of Aesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 71(2) (2013): 133–43.
- 2 For a good overview see Paul C. Taylor, *Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics* (London: Wiley Blackwell 2016).

Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man

Friedrich Schiller

Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) was a German dramatist, poet, and philosopher who stressed the importance of the aesthetic impulse and strongly influenced the development of German romanticism.

Twentieth Letter

1. That freedom cannot be affected by anything whatsoever follows from our very notion of freedom. But that freedom is itself an effect of Nature (this work taken in its widest sense) and not the work of Man, that it can, therefore, also be furthered or thwarted by natural means, follows no less inevitably [. . .] It arises only when man is a complete being, when both his fundamental drives [for form and matter] are fully developed; it will, therefore, be lacking as long as he is incomplete, as long as one of the two drives is excluded, and it should be capable of being restored by anything which gives him back his completeness.

2. Now we can, in fact, in the species as a whole as well as in the individual human being, point to a moment in which man is not yet complete, and in which one of his two drives is exclusively active within him. We know that he

begins by being nothing but life, in order to end by becoming form; that he is an Individual before he is a Person, and that he proceeds from limitation to infinity. The sensuous drive, therefore, comes into operation earlier than the rational, because sensation precedes consciousness, and it is this priority of the sensuous drive which provides the clue to the whole history of human freedom.

3. For there is, after all, a moment in which the life-impulse, just because the form-impulse is not yet running counter to it, operates as nature and as necessity; a moment in which the life of sense is a power because man has not yet begun to be a human being; for in the human being proper there cannot exist any power other than the will. But in the state of reflection into which he is now to pass, it will be precisely the opposite: Reason is to be a power, and a logical or moral necessity to take the place of that physical necessity. Hence sensation as a power must first be destroyed before law can be enthroned as such. It is, therefore, not simply a matter of something beginning which was not there before; something which was there must first cease to be. Man cannot pass directly from feeling to thought; he must first take one step backwards, since only

through one determination being annulled again can a contrary determination take its place. In order to exchange passivity for autonomy, a passive determination for an active one, man must therefore be momentarily free of all determination whatsoever, and pass through a state of pure determinability. He must consequently, in a certain sense, return to that negative state of complete absence of determination in which he found himself before anything at all had made an impression upon his senses. But that former condition was completely devoid of content; and now it is a question of combining such sheer absence of determination, and an equally unlimited determinability, with the greatest possible content, since directly from this condition something positive is to result. The determination he has received through sensation must therefore be preserved, because there must be no loss of reality; but at the same time it must, inasmuch as it is limitation, be annulled, since an unlimited determinability is to come into existence. The problem is, therefore, at one and the same time to destroy and to maintain the determination of the condition – and this is possible in one way only: by confronting it with another determination. The scales of the balance stand level when they are empty; but they also stand level when they contain equal weights.

4. Our psyche passes, then, from sensation to thought *via* a middle disposition in which sense and reason are both active at the same time. Precisely for this reason, however, they cancel each other out as determining forces, and bring about a negation by means of an opposition. This middle disposition, in which the psyche is subject neither to physical nor to moral constraint, and yet is active in both these ways, pre-eminently deserves to be called a free disposition; and if we are to call the condition of sensuous determination the physical, and the condition of rational determination the logical or moral, then we call this condition of real and active determinability the aesthetic. [(For readers not altogether familiar with the precise meaning of this word, which is so much abused through ignorance, the following may serve as an explanation. Every thing which is capable of phenomenal manifestation may be thought of under four different aspects. A thing can relate directly to our sensual condition (to our being and well-being): that is its physical character. Or it can relate to our intel-

lect, and afford us knowledge: that is its logical character. Or it can relate to our will, and be considered as an object of choice for a rational being: that is its moral character. Or, finally, it can relate to the totality of our various functions without being a definite object for any single one of them: that is its aesthetic character. A man can please us through his readiness to oblige; he can, through his discourse, give us food for thought; he can, through his character, fill us with respect; but finally he can also, independently of all this, and without our taking into consideration in judging him any law or any purpose, please us simply as we contemplate him and by the sheer manner of his being. Under this last-named quality of being we are judging him aesthetically. Thus there is an education to health, an education to understanding, an education to morality, an education to taste and beauty. This last has as its aim the development of the whole complex of our sensual and spiritual powers in the greatest possible harmony. Because, however, misled by false notions of taste and confirmed still further in this error by false reasoning, people are inclined to include in the notion of the aesthetic the notion of the arbitrary too, I add here the superfluous comment (despite the fact that these Letters on Aesthetic Education are concerned with virtually nothing else but the refutation of that very error) that our psyche in the aesthetic state does indeed act freely, is in the highest degree free from all compulsion, but is in no wise free from laws; and that this aesthetic freedom is distinguishable from logical necessity in thinking, or moral necessity in willing, only by the fact that the laws according to which the psyche then behaves do not become apparent as such, and since they encounter no resistance, never appear as a constraint.)]

Twenty-First Letter

1. There is, as I observed at the beginning of the last Letter, a twofold condition of determinability and a twofold condition of determination. I can now clarify this statement.

2. The psyche may be said to be determinable simply because it is not determined at all; but it is also determinable inasmuch as it is determined in a way which does not exclude anything, i.e., when the determination it undergoes is of a

kind which does not involve limitation. The former is mere indetermination (it is without limits, because it is without reality); the latter is aesthetic determinability (it has no limits, because it embraces all reality).

3. And the psyche may be said to be determined inasmuch as it is limited at all; but it is also determined inasmuch as it limits itself, by virtue of its own absolute power. It finds itself in the first of these two states whenever it feels; in the second, whenever it thinks. What thought is in respect of determination, therefore, the aesthetic disposition is in respect of determinability; the former is limitation by virtue of the infinite force within it, the latter is negation by virtue of the infinite abundance within it. Even as sensation and thought have one single point of contact – viz., that in both states the psyche is determined, and man is something, either individual or person, to the exclusion of all else – but in all other respects are poles apart: so, in like manner, aesthetic determinability has one single point of contact with mere indetermination – viz., that both exclude any determinate mode of existence – while in all other respects they are to each other as nothing is to everything, hence, utterly and entirely different. If therefore, the latter – indetermination through sheer absence of determination – was thought of as an empty infinity, then aesthetic freedom of determination, which is its counterpart in reality, must be regarded as an infinity filled with content: an idea which accords completely with the results of the foregoing inquiry.

4. In the aesthetic state, then, man is Nought, if we are thinking of any particular result rather than of the totality of his powers, and considering the absence in him of any specific determination. Hence we must allow that those people are entirely right who declare beauty, and the mood it induces in us, to be completely indifferent and unfruitful as regards either knowledge or character. They are entirely right; for beauty produces no particular result whatsoever, neither for the understanding nor for the will. It accomplishes no particular purpose, neither intellectual nor moral; it discovers no individual truth, helps us to perform no individual duty and is, in short, as unfitted to provide a firm basis for character as to enlighten the understanding. By means of aesthetic culture, therefore, the personal worth of a man, or his dignity, inasmuch as this can depend

solely upon himself, remains completely indeterminate; and nothing more is achieved by it than that he is henceforth enabled by the grace of Nature to make of himself what he will – that the freedom to be what he ought to be is completely restored to him.

5. But precisely thereby something Infinite is achieved. For as soon as we recall that it was precisely of this freedom that he was deprived by the one-sided constraint of nature in the field of sensation and by the exclusive authority of reason in the realm of thought, then we are bound to consider the power which is restored to him in the aesthetic mode as the highest of all bounties, as the gift of humanity itself. True, he possesses this humanity *in potentia* before every determinate condition into which he can conceivably enter. But he loses it in practice with every determinate condition into which he does enter. And if he is to pass into a condition of an opposite nature, this humanity must be restored to him each time anew through the life of the aesthetic. (Admittedly the rapidity with which certain types pass from sensation to thought or decision scarcely – if indeed at all – allows them to become aware of the aesthetic mode through which they must in that time necessarily pass. Such natures cannot for any length of time tolerate the state of indetermination, but press impatiently for some result which in the state of aesthetic limitlessness they cannot find. In others, by contrast, who find enjoyment more in the feeling of total capacity than in any single action, the aesthetic state tends to spread itself over a much wider area. Much as the former dread emptiness, just as little are the latter capable of tolerating limitation. I need scarcely say that the former are born for detail and subordinate occupations, the latter, provided they combine this capacity with a sense of reality, destined for wholeness and for great roles.)

6. It is, then, not just poetic licence but philosophical truth when we call beauty our second creatress. For although it only offers us the possibility of becoming human beings, and for the rest leaves it to our own free will to decide how far we wish to make this a reality, it does in this resemble our first creatress, Nature, which likewise conferred upon us nothing more than the power of becoming human, leaving the use and practice of that power to our own free will and decision.

Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre

J.-J. Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) was a Swiss-born philosopher who made influential contributions to political philosophy and moral psychology. In this 1758 essay, he opposes the *Encyclopédiste*, Jean d'Alembert, warning of the morally and socially corrupting influence of the theater.

J.-J. Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva
TO

M. d'Alembert, of the French Academy, The Royal Academy of Sciences of Paris, the Prussian Academy, the Royal Society of London, the Royal Academy of Literature of Sweden, and the Institute of Bologna;

On his article Geneva in the seventh volume of l'*Encyclopédie* and especially on the project of establishing a dramatic theatre in that city.

Di meliora piis, erroremque bostibus ilium.
Virg. Georg. III. 513

Preface

I am at fault if I have on this occasion taken up my pen without necessity. It can be neither advantageous nor agreeable for me to attack M. d'Alembert. I respect his person; I admire his talents; I like his works; I am aware of the good things he has said

of my country. Honored myself by his praises, I am in all decency obliged to every sort of consideration for him. But consideration outweighs duty only with those for whom all morality consists in appearances. Justice and truth are man's first duties; humanity and country his first affections. Every time that private considerations cause him to change this order, he is culpable. Could I be culpable in doing what I ought? To answer me one must have a country to serve and more love for his duties than fear of men's displeasure.

Since not everybody has l'*Encyclopédie* before his eyes, I shall here transcribe the passage from the article GENEVA which placed the pen in my hand. The article would have caused the pen to fall from my hand if I aspired to the honor of writing well. But I dare seek another honor in which I fear no one's competition. In reading this passage by itself, more than one reader will be astonished by the zeal which seems to have inspired it; in reading in the context of the whole article, he will find that the theatre which is not at Geneva, and could be there, takes up one-eighth as much space as do the things which are there.

The drama is not tolerated at Geneva. It is not that they disapprove of the theatre in itself; but they fear, it is said, the taste for adornment,

dissipation, and libertinism which the actors' troops disseminate among the youth. However, would it not be possible to remedy this difficulty with laws that are severe and well administered concerning the conduct of the actors? In this way Geneva would have theatre and morals [manners], and would enjoy the advantages of both; the theatrical performances would form the taste of the citizens and would give them a fineness of tact, a delicacy of sentiment, which is very difficult to acquire without the help of theatrical performances; literature would profit without the progress of libertinism, and Geneva would join to the prudence of Lacedaemon the urbanity of Athens. Another consideration, worthy of a republic so prudent and so enlightened, ought perhaps to oblige it to permit the theatre, The barbarous prejudice against the actor's profession, the sort of abasement in which we have placed these men so necessary to the progress and support of the arts, is certainly one of the principal causes which contribute to the dissoluteness for which we reproach them. They seek to compensate themselves with pleasure for the esteem which their estate cannot win for them. Among us, an actor with morals [manners] is doubly to be respected, but we hardly take notice of him. The tax-farmer who insults public indigence and feeds himself from it, the courtier who crawls and does not pay his debts, these are the sorts of men we honor the most. If the actors were not only tolerated at Geneva but were first restrained by wise regulations, then protected and even respected when they had earned such respect, and, finally, placed absolutely on the same level as the other citizens, this city would soon have the advantage of possessing what is thought to be so rare and is so only through our fault: a company of actors worthy of esteem. Let us add that this company would soon become Europe's best; many persons, full of taste and capacity for the theatre and who fear being dishonored among us if they devoted themselves to it, would flock to Geneva to cultivate, not only without shame but even with esteem, a talent so agreeable and so infrequent. This city, which many Frenchmen consider dull because they are deprived of the theatre, would then become the seat of decent pleasures, just as it is now the seat of philosophy and liberty; and foreigners would no longer be surprised to see that in a city where proper and correct theatre is

forbidden, coarse and silly farces as contrary to good taste as to good morals [manners] are permitted. This is not all: little by little the example of Geneva's actors, the correctness of their conduct and the respect which it would cause them to enjoy, would serve as a model to the actors of other nations and as a lesson to those who have treated them until now with so much severity and even inconsistency. One would no longer see them, on the one hand, being pensioned by the government and, on the other, as objects of anathema; our priests would lose the habit of excommunicating them, and our men of the middle class of regarding them with contempt; and a little republic would have the glory of having reformed Europe on this point, which is perhaps more important than is thought.

This is certainly the most agreeable and seductive picture that could be offered us, but is, at the same time, the most dangerous advice that could be given us. At least, such is my sentiment, and my reasons are in this writing. With what avidity will the young of Geneva, swept away by so weighty an authority, give themselves to ideas for which they already have only too great a penchant? Since the publication of this volume, how many young Genevans, otherwise good citizens, are waiting for the moment to promote the establishment of a theatre, believing that they are rendering a service to their country and, almost, to humankind? This is the subject of my alarm; this is the ill that I would fend off. I do justice to the intentions of M. d'Alembert; I hope he will do the same in regard to mine. I have no more desire to displease him than he to do us injury. But, finally, even if mistaken, must I not act and speak according to my conscience and my lights? Ought I to have remained silent? Could I have, without betraying my duty and my country?

[. . .]

II

I HASTEN to turn to a discussion that is less grave and less serious but which is still of enough concern to us to merit our reflection and which I enter into more willingly as it is somewhat more within my competence. It is that of the project to establish a theatre for the drama at Geneva. I shall not expound here my conjectures about the

motives which might have brought you to propose an establishment so contrary to our maxims. Whatever your reasons, I have here to do only with ours; and all that I shall permit myself to say with respect to you is that you will surely be the first philosopher¹ who ever encouraged a free people, a small city, and a poor state to burden itself with a public theatre.

How many questions I find to discuss in what you appear to have settled! Whether the theatre is good or bad in itself? Whether it can be united with morals [manners]? Whether it is in conformity with republican austerity? Whether it ought to be tolerated in a little city? Whether the actor's profession can be a decent one? Whether actresses can be as well behaved as other women? Whether good laws suffice for repressing the abuses? Whether these laws can be well observed? etc. Everything is still problematic concerning the real effects of the theatre; for, since the disputes that it occasions are solely between the men of the church and the men of the world, each side views the problem only through its prejudices. Here, Sir, are studies that would not be unworthy of your pen. As for me, without believing that what I might do could serve as a substitute for your efforts, I shall limit myself in this essay to seeking those clarifications that you have made necessary. I beg you to take into consideration that in speaking my opinion in imitation of your example, I am fulfilling a duty toward my country, and that, if my sentiments are mistaken, at least this error can hurt no one.

At the first glance given to these institutions I see immediately that the theatre is a form of amusement; and if it is true that amusements are necessary to man, you will at least admit that they are only permissible insofar as they are necessary, and that every useless amusement is an evil for a being whose life is so short and whose time is so precious. The state of man has its pleasures which are derived from his nature and are born of his labors, his relations, and his needs. And these pleasures, sweeter to the one who tastes them in the measure that his soul is healthier, make whoever is capable of participating in them indifferent to all others. A father, a son, a husband, and a citizen have such cherished duties to fulfil that they are left nothing to give to boredom. The good use of time makes time even more precious, and the better one puts it to use, the less one can

find to lose. Thus it is constantly seen that the habit of work renders inactivity intolerable and that a good conscience extinguishes the taste for frivolous pleasures. But it is discontent with one's self, the burden of idleness, the neglect of simple and natural tastes, that makes foreign amusement so necessary. I do not like the need to occupy the heart constantly with the stage as if it were ill at ease inside of us. Nature itself dictated the response of that barbarian² to whom were vaunted the magnificences of the circus and the games established at Rome. "Don't the Romans," asked this fellow, "have wives or children?" The barbarian was right. People think they come together in the theatre, and it is there that they are isolated. It is there that they go to forget their friends, neighbors, and relations in order to concern themselves with fables, in order to cry for the misfortunes of the dead, or to laugh at the expense of the living. But I should have sensed that this language is no longer seasonable in our times. Let us try to find another which is better understood.

To ask if the theatre is good or bad in itself is to pose too vague a question; it is to examine a relation before having defined the terms. The theatre is made for the people, and it is only by its effects on the people that one can determine its absolute qualities. There can be all sorts of entertainment.³ There is, from people to people, a prodigious diversity of morals [manners], temperaments, and characters. Man is one; I admit it! But man modified by religions, governments, laws, customs, prejudices, and climates becomes so different from himself that one ought not to seek among us for what is good for men in general, but only what is good for them in this time or that country. Thus the plays of Menander, made for the Athenian theatre, were out of place in Rome's. Thus the gladiatorial combats which, during the republic, animated the courage and valor of the Romans, only inspired the population of Rome, under the emperors, with the love of blood and cruelty. The same object offered to the same people at different times taught men at first to despise their own lives and, later, to make sport of the lives of others.

The sorts of entertainment are determined necessarily by the pleasure they give and not by their utility. If utility is there too, so much the better. But the principal object is to please; and, provided that the people enjoy themselves, this

object is sufficiently attained. This alone will always prevent our being able to give these sorts of institutions all the advantages they are susceptible of; and it is a gross self-deception to form an idea of perfection for them that could not be put into practice without putting off those whom one wants to instruct. It is from this that is born the diversity of entertainments according to the diverse tastes of nations. An intrepid, grave, and cruel people wants deadly and perilous festivals in which valor and composure shine. A ferocious and intense people wants blood, combat, and terrible passions. A voluptuous people wants music and dances. A gallant people wants love and civility. A frivolous people wants joking and ridicule. *Trahit sua quemque voluptas*. To please them, there must be entertainments which promote their penchants, whereas what is needed are entertainments which would moderate them.

The stage is, in general, a painting of the human passions, the original of which is in every heart. But if the painter neglected to flatter these passions, the spectators would soon be repelled and would not want to see themselves in a light which made them despise themselves. So that, if he gives an odious coloring to some passions, it is only to those that are not general and are naturally hated. Hence the author, in this respect, only follows public sentiment. And then, these repulsive passions are always used to set off others, if not more legitimate, at least more to the liking of the spectators. It is only reason that is good for nothing on the stage. A man without passions or who always mastered them could not attract anyone. And it has already been observed that a Stoic in tragedy would be an insufferable figure. In comedy he would, at most, cause laughter.

Let no one then attribute to the theatre the power to change sentiments or morals [manners], which it can only follow and embellish. An author who would brave the general taste would soon write for himself alone. When Molière transformed the comic stage, he attacked modes and ridiculous traits. But, for all of that, he did not shock the public's taste.⁴ He followed or expanded on it, just as Corneille, on his part, did. It was the old theatre which was beginning to shock this taste, because, in an age grown more refined, the theatre preserved its initial coarseness. So, also, the general taste having changed since the time of these two authors, if their masterpieces were now

to be presented for the first time, they would inevitably fail. The connoisseurs can very well admire them forever; if the public still admires them, it is more for shame at recanting than from a real sentiment for their beauties. It is said that a good play never fails. Indeed, I believe it; this is because a good play never shocks the morals [manners]⁵ of its time. Who doubts that the best play of Sophocles would fall flat in our theatre? We would be unable to put ourselves in the places of men who are totally dissimilar to us.

Any author who wants to depict alien morals [manners] for us nevertheless takes great pains to make his play correspond to our morals [manners]. Without this precaution, one never succeeds, and even the success of those who have taken it often has grounds very different from those supposed by a superficial observer. If the *Arlequin sauvage* is so well received by audiences, is it thought that this is a result of their taste for the character's sense and simplicity, or that a single one of them would want to resemble him? It is, all to the contrary, that this play appeals to their turn of mind, which is to love and seek out new and singular ideas. Now there is nothing newer for them than what has to do with nature. It is precisely their aversion for the ordinary which sometimes leads them back to the simple things.

It follows from these first observations that the general effect of the theatre is to strengthen the national character, to augment the natural inclinations, and to give a new energy to all the passions. In this sense it would seem that, its effect being limited to intensifying and not changing the established morals [manners], the drama would be good for the good and bad for the vicious. Even in the first case it would remain to be seen if the passions did not degenerate into vices from being too much excited. I know that the poetic theatre claims to do exactly the opposite and to purge the passions in exciting them. But I have difficulty understanding this rule. Is it possible that in order to become temperate and prudent we must begin by being intemperate and mad?

"Oh no! It is not that," say the partisans of the theatre. "Tragedy certainly intends that all the passions which it portrays move us; but it does not always want our emotion to be the same as that of the character tormented by a passion.

More often, on the contrary, its purpose is to excite sentiments in us opposed to those it lends its characters." They say, moreover, that if authors abuse their power of moving hearts to excite an inappropriate interest, this fault ought to be attributed to the ignorance and depravity of the artists and not to the art. They say, finally, that the faithful depiction of the passions and of the sufferings which accompany them suffices in itself to make us avoid them with all the care of which we are capable.

To become aware of the bad faith of all these responses, one need only consult his own heart at the end of a tragedy. Do the emotion, the disturbance, and the softening which are felt within oneself and which continue after the play give indication of an immediate disposition to master and regulate our passions? Are the lively and touching impressions to which we become accustomed and which return so often, quite the means to moderate our sentiments in the case of need? Why should the image of the sufferings born of the passions efface that of the transports of pleasure and joy which are also seen to be born of them and which the authors are careful to adorn even more in order to render their plays more enjoyable? Do we not know that all the passions are sisters and that one alone suffices for arousing a thousand, and that to combat one by the other is only the way to make the heart more sensitive to them all? The only instrument which serves to purge them is reason, and I have already said that reason has no effect in the theatre. It is true that we do not share the feelings of all the characters; for, since their interests are opposed, the author must indeed make us prefer one of them; otherwise we would have no contact at all with the play. But far from choosing, for that reason, the passions which he wants to make us like, he is forced to choose those which we like already. What I have said of the sorts of entertainment ought to be understood even more of the interest which is made dominant in them. At London a drama is interesting when it causes the French to be hated; at Tunis, the noble passion would be piracy; at Messina, a delicious revenge; at Goa, the honor of burning Jews. If an author⁶ shocks these maxims, he will write a very fine play to which no one will go. And then this author must be taxed with ignorance, with having failed in the first law of his art, in the one which serves as the basis for all the

others, which is, to succeed. Thus the theatre purges the passions that one does not have and foments those that one does. Is that a well-administered remedy?

Hence, there is a combination of general and particular causes which keeps the theatre from being given that perfection of which it is thought to be susceptible and from producing the advantageous effects that seem to be expected from it. Even if this perfection is supposed to be as great as it can be, and the people as well disposed as could be wished, nevertheless these effects would be reduced to nothing for want of means to make them felt. I know of only three instruments with which the morals [manners] of a people can be acted upon: the force of the laws, the empire of opinion, and the appeal of pleasure. Now the laws have no access to the theatre where the least constraint would make it a pain and not an amusement.⁷ Opinion does not depend on the theatre, since, rather than giving the law to the public, the theatre receives the law from it. And, as to the pleasure that can be had in the theatre, its whole effect is to bring us back more often.

Let us see if there can be other means. The theatre, I am told, directed as it can and ought to be, makes virtue lovable and vice odious. What? Before there were dramas, were not virtuous men loved, were not the vicious hated, and are these sentiments feebler in the places that lack a theatre? The theatre makes virtue lovable ... It accomplishes a great miracle in doing what nature and reason do before it! The vicious are hated on the stage Are they loved in society when they are known to be such? Is it quite certain that this hate is the work of the author rather than of the crimes that he makes the vicious commit? Is it quite certain that the simple account of these crimes would produce less horror in us than all the colors with which he has painted them? If his whole art consists in producing malefactors for us in order to render them hateful, I am unable to see what is so admirable in this art, and we get, in this regard, only too many lessons without need of this one. Dare I add a suspicion which comes to me? I suspect that any man, to whom the crimes of Phaedra or Medea were told beforehand, would hate them more at the beginning of the play than at the end. And if this suspicion is well founded, then what are we to think of this much-vaunted effect of the theatre?

I should like to be clearly shown, without wasting words, how it could produce sentiments in us that we did not have and could cause us to judge moral beings otherwise than we judge them by ourselves? How puerile and senseless are these vain pretensions when examined closely! If the beauty of virtue were the product of art, virtue would have long since been disfigured! As for me, even if I am again to be regarded as wicked for daring to assert that man is born good, I think it and believe that I have proved it. The source of the concern which attaches us to what is decent and which inspires us with aversion for evil is in us and not in the plays. There is no art for producing this concern, but only for taking advantage of it. The love of the beautiful⁸ is a sentiment as natural to the human heart as the love of self; it is not born out of an arrangement of scenes; the author does not bring it; he finds it there; and out of this pure sentiment, to which he appeals, are born the sweet tears that he causes to flow.

Imagine a play as perfect as you like. Where is the man who, going for the first time, does not go already convinced of what is to be proved in it and already predisposed toward those whom he is meant to like? But this is not the question; what is important is to act consistently with one's principles and to imitate the people whom one esteems. The heart of man is always right concerning that which has no personal relation to himself. In the quarrels at which we are purely spectators, we immediately take the side of justice, and there is no act of viciousness which does not give us a lively sentiment of indignation so long as we receive no profit from it. But when our interest is involved, our sentiments are soon corrupted. And it is only then that we prefer the evil which is useful to us to the good that nature makes us love. Is it not a necessary effect of the constitution of things that the vicious man profits doubly, from his injustice and the probity of others? What more advantageous treaty could he conclude than one obliging the whole world, excepting himself, to be just, so that everyone will faithfully render unto him what is due him, while he renders to no one what he owes? He loves virtue, unquestionably; but he loves it in others because he hopes to profit from it. He wants none of it for himself because it would be costly to him. What then does he go to see at the theatre? Precisely what he wants to find everywhere: lessons of virtue for the

public, from which he excepts himself, and people sacrificing everything to their duty while nothing is exacted from him.

I hear it said that tragedy leads to pity through fear. So it does; but what is this pity? A fleeting and vain emotion which lasts no longer than the illusion which produced it; a vestige of natural sentiment soon stifled by the passions; a sterile pity which feeds on a few tears and which has never produced the slightest act of humanity. Thus, the sanguinary Sulla cried at the account of evils he had not himself committed. Thus, the tyrant of Phera hid himself at the theatre for fear of being seen groaning with Andromache and Priam, while he heard without emotion the cries of so many unfortunate victims slain daily by his orders. Tacitus reports that Valerius Asiaticus, calumniously accused by the order of Messalina, who wanted him to perish, defended himself before the emperor in a way that touched this prince very deeply and drew tears from Messalina herself. She went into the next room in order to regain her composure after having, in the midst of her tears, whispered a warning to Vitellius not to let the accused escape. I never see one of these weeping ladies in the boxes at the theatre, so proud of their tears, without thinking of the tears of Messalina for the poor Valerius Asiaticus.

If, according to the observation of Diogenes Laertius, the heart is more readily touched by feigned ills than real ones, if theatrical imitations draw forth more tears than would the presence of the objects imitated, it is less because the emotions are feebler and do not reach the level of pain, as the Abbé du Bos believes,⁹ than because they are pure and without mixture of anxiety for ourselves. In giving our tears to these fictions, we have satisfied all the rights of humanity without having to give anything more of ourselves; whereas unfortunate people in person would require attention from us, relief, consolation, and work, which would involve us in their pains and would require at least the sacrifice of our indolence, from all of which we are quite content to be exempt. It could be said that our heart closes itself for fear of being touched at our expense.

In the final accounting, when a man has gone to admire fine actions in stories and to cry for imaginary miseries, what more can be asked of him? Is he not satisfied with himself? Does he not applaud his fine soul? Has he not acquitted

himself of all that he owes to virtue by the homage which he has just rendered it? What more could one want of him? That he practice it himself? He has no role to play; he is no actor.

The more I think about it, the more I find that everything that is played in the theatre is not brought nearer to us but made more distant. When I see the *Comte d'Essex*, the reign of Elizabeth is ten centuries removed in my eyes, and, if an event that took place yesterday at Paris were played, I should be made to suppose it in the time of Molière. The theatre has rules, principles, and a morality apart, just as it has a language and a style of dress that is its own. We say to ourselves that none of this is suitable for us, and that we should think ourselves as ridiculous to adopt the virtues of its heroes as it would be to speak in verse or to put on Roman clothing. This is pretty nearly the use of all these great sentiments and of all these brilliant maxims that are vaunted with so much emphasis—to relegate them forever to the stage, and to present virtue to us as a theatrical game, good for amusing the public but which it would be folly seriously to attempt introducing into society. Thus the most advantageous impression of the best tragedies is to reduce all the duties of man to some passing and sterile emotions that have no consequences, to make us applaud our courage in praising that of others, our humanity in pitying the ills that we could have cured, our charity in saying to the poor, God will help you!

To be sure, a simpler style can be adopted on the stage, and the tone of the theatre can be reconciled in the drama with that of the world. But in this way, morals [manners] are not corrected; they are depicted, and an ugly face does not appear ugly to him who wears it. If we wish to correct them by caricaturing them, we leave the realm of probability and nature, and the picture no longer produces an effect. Caricature does not render objects hateful; it only renders them ridiculous. And out of this arises a very great difficulty; afraid of being ridiculous, men are no longer afraid of being vicious. The former cannot be remedied without promoting the latter. Why, you will ask, must I suppose this to be a necessary opposition? Why, Sir? Because the good do not make evil men objects of derision, but crush them with their contempt, and nothing is a less funny or laughable than virtue's indignation. Ridicule, on the other hand, is the favorite arm of vice.

With it, the respect that the heart owes to virtue is attacked at its root, and the love that is felt for it is finally extinguished.

Thus everything compels us to abandon this vain idea that some wish to give us of the perfection of a form of theatre directed toward public utility. It is an error, said the grave Muralt, to hope that the true relations of things will be faithfully presented in the theatre. For, in general, the poet can only alter these relations in order to accommodate them to the taste of the public. In the comic, he diminishes them and sets them beneath man; in the tragic, he extends them to render them heroic and sets them above humanity. Thus they are never to his measure, and we always see beings other than our own kind in the theatre. I add that this difference is so true and so well recognized that Aristotle makes a rule of it in his poetics: *Comoedia enim deteriores, Tragoedia meliores quam nunc sunt imitari conantur*. Here is a well-conceived imitation, which proposes for its object that which does not exist at all and leaves, between defect and excess, that which is as a useless thing! But of what importance is the truth of the imitation, provided the illusion is there? The only object is to excite the curiosity of the public. These productions of wit and craft, like most others, have for their end only applause. When the author receives it and the actors share in it, the play has reached its goal, and no other advantage is sought. Now, if the benefit is non-existent, the harm remains; and since the latter is indisputable, the issue seems to me to be settled. But let us turn to some examples which will make the solution clearer.

Notes

- 1 Of two famous historians, both philosophers, both dear to M. d'Alembert, the modern would be of his opinion, perhaps; but Tacitus, whom he loves, about whom he meditates, whom he deigns to translate, the grave Tacitus, whom he quotes so willingly, and whom he sometimes imitates so well except for his obscurity, would he have agreed?
- 2 Chrysost. in Matth. Homel, 38.
- 3 "There can be entertainments blameable in themselves, like those which are inhuman or indecent and licentious; such were some of the pagan entertainments. But there are also some which are indifferent in themselves and only become bad through their abuse. For example, theatrical plays are not objectionable insofar as in them descriptions are to

be found of the characters and actions of men, where agreeable and useful lessons for every station in life can even be presented. But if an easygoing morality is retailed in them; if the people who exercise this profession lead a licentious life and serve to corrupt others; if such shows support vanity, idleness, luxury, and lewdness, it is evident that the thing turns into an abuse; and unless a way is found to correct these abuses or to protect ourselves from them, it is better to give up this form of amusement." (*Instruction chrétienne*, Vol. III, Book iii, ch. 16.)

This is the state of the question when it is well posed. What must be known is whether the morality of the theatre is necessarily easygoing, whether the abuses are inevitable, whether its difficulties are derived from the nature of the thing or whether they come from causes that can be set aside.

- 4 Although he anticipated public taste by only a bit, Molière himself had difficulty in succeeding; the most perfect of his works failed at its birth because he presented it too soon and public was not yet ripe for the *Misanthrope*.

All of this is founded on an evident maxim, i.e., that a people often follows practices which it despises or which it is ready to despise as soon as someone dares to set the example for it. When, in my day, the puppet rage was ridiculed, what was said in the theatre was only the reflection of what was thought by even those who spent their days at that silly amusement. But the constant tastes of a people, its customs, its old prejudices, ought to be respected on the stage. Never has a poet come off well who violated this law.

- 5 I say the tastes or morals [manners] indifferently. For although the one is not the other, they always have a common origin and undergo the same revolutions. This does not imply that good taste and good morals [manners] always reign at the same time; this is an assertion which requires clarification and discussion. But that a certain state of taste

always answers to a certain state of morals [manners] is indisputable.

- 6 In order to see this, let a man, righteous and virtuous, but simple and crude, with neither love nor gallantry and who speaks no fine phrases, be put on the French stage; let a prudent man without prejudices be put on it, one who, having been affronted by a bully, refuses to go and have his throat cut by the offender; and let the whole theatrical art be exhausted in rendering these characters as appealing to the French people as is the Cid: I will be wrong, if it succeeds.
- 7 The laws can determine the subjects of the plays, and their form, and the way to play them; but the laws cannot force the public to enjoy them. The emperor Nero sang at the theatre and had all those who fell asleep put to death; still he could not keep everybody awake. And the pleasure of a short nap came close to costing Vespasian his life. Noble Actors of the Paris Opera, if you had enjoyed the imperial power, I should not now complain about having lived too long.
- 8 We have to do with the morally beautiful here. Whatever the philosophers may say of it, this love is innate to man and serves as principle to his conscience. (I can cite as an example of this the little play *Nanine*, which has caused the audience to grumble and is only protected by the great reputation of its author. All this is only because honor, virtue, and the pure sentiments of nature are preferred in it to the impertinent prejudice of social station.)
- 9 He says that the poet afflicts us only so much as we wish, that he makes us like his heroes only so far as it pleases us. This is contrary to all experience. Many people refrain from going to tragedy because they are moved to the point of discomfort; others, ashamed of crying at the theatre, do so nevertheless in spite of themselves; and these effects are not rare enough to be only exceptions to the maxim of this author.

Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics

G.W.F. Hegel

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831),
who became Professor of Philosophy in
Berlin, where he wrote voluminously,
attracted a multitude of students and played
a dominant role in the development of
post-Kantian thought.

Chapter I
The Range of Aesthetic
Defined, and Some Objections
against the Philosophy of Art Refuted

- [i] The present course of lectures deals with ‘Aesthetic’. Their subject is the wide *realm of the beautiful*, and, more particularly, their province is *Art* – we may restrict it, indeed, to *Fine Art*.

The name ‘Aesthetic’ in its natural sense is not quite appropriate to this subject. ‘Aesthetic’ means more precisely the science of sensation or feeling. Thus understood, it arose as a new science, or rather as something that was to become a branch of philosophy for the first time, in the school of Wolff, at the epoch when works of art were being considered in Germany in the light of the feelings which they were supposed to evoke – feelings of pleasure, admiration, fear, pity, etc. The name was so inappropriate, or, strictly speaking, so superficial, that for this reason it was attempted to form other names, e.g. ‘Kallistic’. But this name, again,

is unsatisfactory, for the science to be designated does not treat of beauty in general, but merely of *artistic* beauty. We shall, therefore, permit the name Aesthetic to stand, because it is nothing but a name, and so; is indifferent to us, and, moreover, has up to a certain point passed, into common language. As a name, therefore, it may be retained. The proper expression, however, for our science is the ‘Philosophy of Art’, or, more definitely, the ‘Philosophy of Fine Art’.

α. By the above expression we, at once exclude the *beauty of Nature*. Such a limitation of our subject may appear to be an arbitrary demarcation, resting on the principle that every science has the prerogative of marking out its boundaries at pleasure. But this is not the sense in which we are to understand the limitation of Aesthetic to *the beauty of art*. It is true that in common life we are in the habit of speaking of beautiful colour, a beautiful sky, a beautiful river, and, moreover, of beautiful flowers, beautiful animals, and, above all, of beautiful human beings. We will not just now enter into the controversy how far such objects can justly have the attribute of beauty ascribed to them, or how far, speaking generally, natural beauty ought to be recognized as existing besides artistic beauty. We may, however, begin at once by asserting that artistic beauty stands *higher*

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than nature. For the beauty of art is the beauty that is born – born again, that is – of the mind; and by as much as the mind and its products are higher than nature and its appearances, by so much the beauty of art is higher than the beauty of nature. Indeed, if we look at it *formally* – i.e. only considering in what way it exists, not what there is in it – even a silly fancy such as may pass through a man's head is *higher* than any product of nature; for such a fancy must at least be characterized by intellectual being and by freedom. In respect of its content, on the other hand, the sun, for instance, appears to us to be an absolutely necessary factor in the universe, while a blundering notion passes away as accidental and transient; but yet, in its own being, a natural existence such as the sun is indifferent, is not free or self-conscious, while if we consider it in its necessary connection with other things we are not regarding it by itself or for its own sake, and, therefore, not as beautiful.

[iii] To say, as we have said, in general terms, that mind and its artistic beauty stand *higher* than natural beauty is no doubt to determine almost nothing. For 'higher' is an utterly indefinite expression, which designates the beauty of nature and that of art as if merely standing side by side in the space of the imagination, and states the difference between them as purely quantitative, and, therefore, purely external. But the mind and its artistic beauty, in being '*higher*' as compared with nature, have a distinction which is not simply relative. Mind, and mind only, is capable of truth, and comprehends in itself all that is, so that whatever is beautiful can only be really and truly beautiful as partaking in this higher element and as created thereby. In this sense the beauty of nature reveals itself as but a reflection of the beauty which belongs to the mind, as an imperfect, incomplete mode of being, as a mode whose really substantial element is contained in the mind itself.

[iv] Moreover, we shall find the restriction to fine art very natural, for however much has been and is said – though less by the ancients than by ourselves – of the beauties of nature, yet no one has taken it into his head to emphasize the point of view of the *beauty* of natural objects, and to attempt to make a science, a systematic account of these beauties. The aspect of *Utility*, indeed, has been accentuated, and a science, e.g. of natural things useful against diseases, a *materia medica*,

has been compiled, consisting in a description of minerals, chemical products, plants, and animals that are of use for curative purposes. But the realm of nature has not been arrayed and estimated under the aspect of beauty. In dealing with natural beauty we find ourselves too open to *vagueness*, and too destitute of a *criterion*; for which reason such a review would have little interest.

The above prefatory remarks upon beauty in nature and in art, upon the relation between the two, and the exclusion of the former from the region of the subject proper, are meant to remove any idea that the limitation of our science is owing merely to choice and to caprice. But this is not the place to *demonstrate* the above relation, for the consideration of it falls within our science itself, and therefore it cannot be discussed and demonstrated till later.

Supposing that for the present we have limited ourselves to the beauty of art, this first step brings us at once into contact with fresh difficulties:

[vi] **β.** The first thing that may suggest itself to us is the difficulty whether fine art shows itself to *deserve* a scientific treatment. Beauty and art, no doubt, pervade all the business of life like a kindly genius, and form the bright adornment of all our surroundings, both mental and material, soothing the sadness of our condition and the embarrassments of real life, killing time in entertaining fashion, and where there is nothing good to be achieved, occupying the place of what is vicious, better, at any rate, than vice. Yet although art presses in with its pleasing shapes on every possible occasion, from the rude adornments of the savage to the splendour of the temple with its untold wealth of decoration, still these shapes themselves appear to fall outside the real purposes of life. And even if the creations of art do not prove detrimental to our graver purposes, if they appear at times actually to further them by keeping evil at a distance, still it is so far true that art belongs rather to the relaxation and leisure of the mind, while the substantive interests of life demand its exertion. Hence it may seem unsuitable and pedantic to treat with scientific seriousness what is not in itself of a serious nature. In any case, upon such a view art appears as a superfluity, even if the softening of the mental temper which preoccupation with beauty has power to produce does not turn out a detrimental, because effeminating influence. In this

aspect of the matter, the fine arts being granted to be a *luxury*, it has been thought necessary in various ways to take up their defence with reference to their relation towards *practical* necessities, and more especially towards morality and piety; and, as it is impossible to demonstrate their harmlessness, at least to make it credible that the mental luxury in question afforded a larger sum of *advantages* than of *disadvantages*. With this view very serious aims have been ascribed to art, and it has been recommended in various ways as a mediator between reason and sensuousness, between inclination and duty, as the reconciler of these elements in the obstinate conflict and repulsion which their collision generates. But the opinion may be maintained that, assuming such aims of art, more serious though they are, nothing is gained for reason and duty by the attempt at mediation, because these principles, as essentially incapable of intermixture, can be parties to no such compromise, but demand in their manifestation the same purity which they have in themselves. And it might be said that art itself is not made any more worthy of scientific discussion by such treatment, seeing that it is still doubly a servant – to higher aims, no doubt, on the one hand, but none the less to vacuity and frivolity on the other; and in such service can at best only display itself as a means, instead of being an end pursued for its own sake. Finally, art, considered as a means, seems to labour under this defect of form, that, supposing it to be subordinated to serious ends, and to produce results of importance, still the means employed by art for such purposes is *deception*. For beauty has its being in appearance. Now, it will readily be admitted that an aim which is real and true in itself ought not to be attained by deception, and if it does here and there achieve some success in this way, that can only be the case to a limited extent, and even then deception cannot approve itself as the right means. For the means should correspond to the dignity of the end, and only what is real and true, not semblance or deception, has power to create what is real and true; just as science, for instance, has to consider the true interests of the mind in accordance with the truth of reality and the true way of conceiving it.

In all these respects it may appear as if fine art were *unworthy* of scientific consideration; because, as is alleged, it is at best a pleasing amusement, and even if it pursues more serious aims is in contradiction with their nature, but is at

best the mere servant alike of amusement and of serious aims, and yet has at command, whether as the element of its being or as the vehicle of its action, nothing beyond deception and semblance.

γ. But, in the second place, it is a still more probable aspect of the question that, even if fine art were to form a subject of philosophical reflections in a general way, it would be no *appropriate* matter for strictly scientific treatment. The beauty of art presents itself to sense, to feeling, to perception, to imagination; its sphere is not that of thought, and the apprehension of its activity and its productions demand another organ than that of the scientific intelligence. Moreover, what we enjoy in the beauty of art is precisely the *freedom* of its productive and plastic energy. In the origination, as in the contemplation, of its creations we appear to escape wholly from the fetters of rule and regularity. In the forms of art we seek for repose and animation in place of the austerity of the reign of law and the sombre self-concentration of thought; we would exchange the shadow-land of the idea for cheerful vigorous reality. And lastly, the source of artistic creations is the free activity of fancy, which in her imagination is more free than nature's self. Not only has art at command the whole wealth of natural forms in the brilliant variety of their appearance, but also the creative imagination has power to expatiate inexhaustibly beyond their limit in products of *its own*. It may be supposed that, in presence of this immeasurable abundance of inspiration and its free creations, thought will necessarily lose the courage to bring them *completely* before it, to criticize them, and to array them under its universal formulae.

Science, on the contrary, everyone admits, is compelled by its form to busy itself with thought which abstracts from the mass of particulars. For this reason, on the one hand, imagination with its contingency and caprice – that is, the organ of artistic activity and enjoyment – is of necessity excluded from science. And on the other hand, seeing that art is what cheers and animates the dull and withered dryness of the idea, reconciles with reality its abstraction and its dissociation therefrom, and supplies out of the real world what is lacking to the notion, it follows, we may think, that a *purely* intellectual treatment of art destroys this very means of supplementation, annihilates it, and reduces the idea once more to its simplicity

devoid of reality, and to its shadowy abstractness. And further, it is objected that science, as a matter of *content*, occupies itself with what is *necessary*. Now, if Aesthetic puts aside the beauty of nature, we not only gain nothing in respect of necessity, but to all appearance have got further away from it. For the expression *Nature* at once gives us the idea of Necessity and Uniformity, that is to say, of a behaviour which may be hoped to be akin to science, and capable of submitting thereto. But in the mind, generally, and more particularly in the imagination, compared with nature, caprice and lawlessness are supposed to be peculiarly at home; and these withdraw themselves as a matter of course from all scientific explanation.

Thus in all these aspects – in origin, in effect, and in range – fine art, instead of showing itself fitted for scientific study, seems rather in its own right to resist the regulating activity of thought, and to be unsuitable for strict scientific discussion.

[ix] These and similar objections against a genuinely scientific treatment of fine art are drawn from common ideas, points of view, and considerations, which may be read *ad nauseam* in full elaboration in the older writers upon beauty and the fine arts, especially in the works of French authors. And in part they contain facts which have a certain truth; in part, too, the argumentation based upon these facts appears plausible at first sight. Thus, e.g., there is the fact that the forms of beauty are as manifold as the phenomenon of beauty is omnipresent; and from this, if we choose, we may proceed to conclude to a universal *impulse of Beauty* in human nature, and then go on to the further inference: that because ideas of beauty are so endlessly various, and therefore, as seems obvious, are something *particular*, it follows that there can be no universal laws of beauty and of taste.

[x] Before it is possible for us to turn from such considerations to our subject proper, it is our business to devote a brief introductory discussion to the objections and doubts which have been raised. In the first place, as regards the *worthiness* of art to be scientifically considered, it is no doubt the case that art can be employed as a fleeting pastime, to serve the ends of pleasure and entertainment, to decorate our surroundings, to impart pleasantness to the external conditions of our life, and to emphasize other objects by means of

ornament. In this mode of employment art is indeed not independent, not free, but servile. But what we mean to consider, is the art which is *free* in its end as in its means.

That art is in the abstract capable of serving other aims, and of being a mere pastime, is moreover a relation which it shares with thought. For, on the one hand, science, in the shape of the subservient understanding, submits to be used for finite purposes, and as an accidental means, and in that case is not self-determined, but determined by alien objects and relations; but, on the other hand, science liberates itself from this service to rise in free independence to the attainment of truth, in which medium, free from all interference, it fulfils itself in conformity with its proper aims. [xi]

Fine art is not real art till it is in this sense free, and only achieves its highest task when it has taken its place in the same sphere with religion and philosophy, and has become simply a mode of revealing to consciousness and bringing to utterance the Divine Nature, the deepest interests of humanity, and the most comprehensive truths of the mind. It is in works of art that nations have deposited the profoundest intuitions and ideas of their hearts; and fine art is frequently the key – with many nations there is no other-- to the understanding of their wisdom and of their religion. [xii]

This is an attribute which art shares with religion and philosophy, only in this peculiar mode, that it represents even the highest ideas *in sensuous forms*, thereby bringing them nearer to the character of natural phenomena, to the senses, and to feeling. The world, into whose depths *thought* penetrates, is a supra-sensuous world, which is thus, to begin with, erected as a *beyond* over against immediate consciousness and present sensation; the power which thus rescues itself from the *here*, that consists in the actuality and finiteness of sense, is the freedom of thought in cognition. But the mind is able to heal this schism which its advance creates; it generates out of itself the works of fine art as the first middle term of reconciliation between pure thought and what is external, sensuous, and transitory, between nature with its finite actuality and the infinite freedom of the reason that comprehends. [xiii]

§. The *element* of art was said to be in its general nature an *unworthy* element, as consisting in [xiv]

appearance and deception. The censure would be not devoid of justice, if it were possible to class appearance as something that ought not to exist. An appearance or show, however, is essential to existence. Truth could not be, did it not appear and reveal itself, were it not truth *for* someone or something, *for* itself as also *for* Mind. Therefore there can be no objection against appearance in general, but, if at all, against the particular mode of appearance in which art gives actuality to what is in itself real and true. If, in this aspect, the *appearance* with which art gives its conceptions life as determinate existences is to be termed a *deception*, this is a criticism which primarily receives its meaning by comparison with the external world of phenomena and its immediate contact with us as *matter*, and in like manner by the standard of our own world of feeling, that is, the inner world of *sense*. These are the two worlds to which, in the life of daily experience, in our own phenomenal life, we are accustomed to attribute the value and the title of actuality, reality, and truth, in contrast to art, which we set down as lacking such reality and truth. Now, this whole sphere of the empirical inner and outer world is just what is not the world of genuine reality, but is to be entitled a mere appearance more strictly than is true of art, and a crueller deception. Genuine reality is only to be found beyond the immediacy of feeling and of external objects. Nothing is genuinely real but that which is actual in its own right, that which is the substance of nature and of mind, fixing itself indeed in present and definite existence, but in this existence still retaining its essential and self-centred being, and thus and no otherwise attaining genuine reality. The dominion of these universal powers is exactly what art accentuates and reveals. The common outer and inner world also no doubt present to us this essence of reality, but in the shape of a chaos of accidental matters, encumbered by the immediateness of sensuous presentation, and by arbitrary states, events, characters, etc. Art liberates the real import of appearances from the semblance and deception of this bad and fleeting world, and imparts to phenomenal semblances a higher reality, born of mind. The appearances of art, therefore, far from being mere semblances, have the higher reality and the more genuine existence in comparison with the realities of common life.

Just as little can the representations of art be called a deceptive semblance in comparison with the representations of historical narrative, as if that had the more genuine truth. For history has not even immediate existence, but only the intellectual presentation of it, for the element of its portrayals, and its content remains burdened with the whole mass of contingent matter formed by common reality with its occurrences, complications, and individualities. But the work of art brings before us the eternal powers that hold dominion in history, without any such superfluity in the way of immediate sensuous presentation and its unstable semblances.

Again, the mode of appearance of the shapes produced by art may be called a deception in comparison with philosophic thought, with religious or moral principles. Beyond a doubt the mode of revelation which a content attains in the realm of thought is the truest reality; but in comparison with the show or semblance of immediate sensuous existence or of historical narrative, the artistic semblance has the advantage that in itself it points beyond itself, and refers us away from itself to something spiritual which it is meant to bring before the mind's eye. Whereas immediate appearance does not give itself out to be deceptive, but rather to be real and true, though all the time its truth is contaminated and infected by the immediate sensuous element. The hard rind of nature and the common world gives the mind more trouble in breaking through to the idea than do the products of art.

But if, on the one side, we assign this high position to art, we must no less bear in mind, on the other hand, that art is not, either in content or in form, the supreme and absolute mode of bringing the mind's genuine interests into consciousness. The form of art is enough to limit it to a restricted content. Only a certain circle and grade of truth is capable of being represented in the medium of art. Such truth must have in its own nature the capacity to go forth into sensuous form and be adequate to itself therein, if it is to be a genuinely artistic content, as is the case with the gods of Greece. There is, however, a deeper form of truth, in which it is no longer so closely akin and so friendly to sense as to be adequately embraced and expressed by that medium. Of such a kind is the Christian conception of truth; and more especially the spirit of our modern

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world, or, to come closer, of our religion and our intellectual culture, reveals itself as beyond the stage at which art is the highest mode assumed by man's consciousness of the absolute. The peculiar mode to which artistic production and works of art belong no longer satisfies our supreme need. We are above the level at which works of art can be venerated as divine, and actually worshipped; the impression which they make is of a more considerate kind, and the feelings which they stir within us require a higher test and a further confirmation. Thought and reflection have taken their flight above fine art. Those who delight in grumbling and censure may set down this phenomenon for a corruption, and ascribe it to the predominance of passion and selfish interests, which scare away at once the seriousness and the cheerfulness of art. Or we may accuse the troubles of the present time and the complicated condition of civil and political life as hindering the feelings, entangled in minute preoccupations, from freeing themselves, and rising to the higher aims of art, the intelligence itself being subordinate to petty needs and interests, in sciences which only subserve such purposes and are seduced into making this barren region their home.

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However all this may be, it certainly is the case that art no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual wants which earlier epochs and peoples have sought therein, and have found therein only; a satisfaction which, at all events on the religious side, was most intimately and profoundly connected with art. The beautiful days of Greek art, and the golden time of the later middle ages are gone by. The reflective culture of our life of today, makes it a necessity for us, in respect of our will no less than of our judgement, to adhere to general points of view, and to regulate particular matters according to them, so that general forms, laws, duties, rights, maxims are what have validity as grounds of determination and are the chief regulative force. But what is required for artistic interest as for artistic production is, speaking generally, a living creation, in which the universal is not present as law and maxim, but acts as if one with the mood and the feelings, just as, in the imagination, the universal and rational is contained only as brought into unity with a concrete sensuous phenomenon. Therefore, our present in its universal condition

is not favourable to art. As regards the artist himself, it is not merely that the reflection which finds utterance all round him, and the universal habit of having an opinion and passing judgement about art infect him, and mislead him into putting more abstract thought into his works themselves; but also the whole spiritual culture of the age is of such a kind that he himself stands within this reflective world and its conditions, and it is impossible for him to abstract from it by will and resolve, or to contrive for himself and bring to pass, by means of peculiar education or removal from the relations of life, a peculiar solitude that would replace all that is lost.

In all these respects art is, and remains for us, on the side of its highest destiny, a thing of the past. Herein it has further lost for us its genuine truth and life, and rather is transferred into our *ideas* than asserts its former necessity, or assumes its former place, in reality. What is now aroused in us by works of art is over and above our immediate enjoyment, and together with it, our judgement; inasmuch as we subject the content and the means of representation of the work of art and the suitability or unsuitability of the two to our intellectual consideration. Therefore, the *science* of art is a much more pressing need in our day than in times in which art, simply as art, was enough to furnish a full satisfaction. Art invites us to consideration of it by means of thought, not to the end of stimulating art production, but in order to ascertain scientifically what art is.

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ε. As soon as we propose to accept this invitation we are met by the difficulty which has already been touched upon in the suggestion that, though art is a suitable subject for philosophical reflection in the general sense, yet it is not so for systematic and scientific discussion. In this objection there lies the false idea that a philosophical consideration may, nevertheless, be unscientific. On this point it can only be remarked here with brevity that, whatever ideas others may have of philosophy and philosophizing, I regard the pursuit of philosophy as utterly incapable of existing apart from a scientific procedure. Philosophy has to consider its object in its necessity, not, indeed, in its subjective necessity or external arrangement, classification, etc., but it has to unfold and demonstrate the object out of the necessity of its own inner nature. Until this evolution is brought to pass the scientific element is lacking to the

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treatment. In as far, however, as the objective necessity of an object lies essentially in its logical and metaphysical nature, the isolated treatment of art must be conducted with a certain relaxation of scientific stringency. For art involves the most complex presuppositions, partly in reference to its content, partly in respect of its medium and element, in which art is constantly on the borders of the arbitrary or accidental. Thus it is only as regards the essential innermost progress of its content and of its media of expression that we must call to mind the outline prescribed by its necessity.

[xx] The objection that works of fine art elude the treatment of scientific thought because they originate out of the unregulated fancy and out of the feelings, are of a number and variety that defy the attempt to gain a conspectus, and therefore take effect only on feeling and imagination, raises a problem which appears still to have importance. For the beauty of art does in fact appear in a form which is expressly contrasted with abstract thought, and which the latter is forced to destroy in exerting the activity which is its nature. This idea coheres with the opinion that reality as such, the life of nature and of mind, is disfigured and slain by comprehension; that, so far from being brought close to us by the thought which comprehends, it is by it that such life is absolutely dissociated from us, so that, by the use of thought as the *means* of grasping what has life, man rather cuts himself off from this his purpose. We cannot speak fully on this subject in the present passage, but only indicate the point of view from which the removal of this difficulty, or impossibility depending on maladaptation, might be effected.

[xxi] It will be admitted, to begin with, that the mind is capable of contemplating itself, and of possessing a consciousness, and that a *thinking* consciousness, of itself and all that is generated by itself. Thought – to think – is precisely that in which the mind has its innermost and essential nature. In gaining this thinking consciousness concerning itself and its products, the mind is behaving according to its essential nature, however much freedom and caprice those products may display, supposing only that in real truth they have mind in them. Now art and its works as generated and created by the mind (spirit) are themselves of a spiritual nature, even if their

mode of representation admits into itself the semblance of sensuous being, and pervades what is sensuous with mind. In this respect art is, to begin with, nearer to mind and its thinking activity than is mere external unintelligent nature; in works of art, mind has to do but with its own. And even if artistic works are not abstract thought and notion, but are an evolution of the notion *out of itself*, an alienation from itself towards the sensuous, still the power of the thinking spirit (mind) lies herein, *not merely* to grasp *itself only* in its peculiar form of the self-conscious spirit (mind), but just as much to recognize itself in its alienation in the shape of feeling and the sensuous, in its other form, by transmuting the metamorphosed thought back into definite thoughts, and so restoring it to itself. And in this preoccupation with the other of itself the thinking spirit is not to be held untrue to itself as if forgetting or surrendering itself therein, nor is it so weak as to lack strength to comprehend what is different from itself, but it comprehends both itself and its opposite. For the notion is the universal, which preserves itself in its particularizations, dominates alike itself and its 'other', and so becomes the power and activity that consists in undoing the alienation which it had evolved. And thus the work of art in which thought alienates itself belongs, like thought itself, to the realm of comprehending thought, and the mind, in subjecting it to scientific consideration, is thereby but satisfying the want of its own inmost nature. For because thought is its essence and notion, it can in the last resort only be satisfied when it has succeeded in imbuing all the products of its activity with thought, and has thus for the first time made them genuinely its own. But, as we shall see more definitely below, art is far from being the highest form of mind, and receives its true ratification only from science.

Just as little does art elude philosophical consideration by unbridled caprice. As has already been indicated, it is its true task to bring to consciousness the highest interests of the mind. Hence it follows at once with respect to the *content* that fine art cannot rove in the wildness of unfettered fancy, for these spiritual interests determine definite bases for its content, how manifold and inexhaustible soever its forms and shapes may be. The same holds true for the forms themselves. They, again, are not at the mercy of

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mere chance. Not every plastic shape is capable of being the expression and representation of those spiritual interests, of absorbing and of reproducing them; every definite content determines a form suitable to it.

In this aspect too, then, we are in a position to find our bearings according to the needs of thought in the apparently unmanageable mass of works and types of art.

Thus, I hope, we have begun by defining the content of our science, to which we propose to confine ourselves, and have seen that neither is fine art unworthy of a philosophical consideration, nor is a philosophical consideration incompetent to arrive at a knowledge of the essence of fine art.

Chapter II

Methods of Science

Applicable to Beauty and Art

[xxiii] If we now investigate *the required mode of scientific consideration*, we here again meet with two opposite ways of treating the subject, each of which appears to exclude the other, and so to hinder us from arriving at *any true result*.

On one side we see the science of art merely, so to speak, busying itself about the actual productions of art from the outside, arranging them in series as a history of art, initiating discussions about extant works, or sketching out theories intended to provide the general points of view that are to govern both criticism and artistic production.

On the other side we see science abandoning itself independently to reflection upon the beautiful, and producing mere generalities which do not touch the work of art in its peculiarity, creating, in short, an abstract philosophy of the beautiful.

[xxiv] 1. As regards the former mode of treatment, which starts from the empirical side, it is the indispensable road for anyone who means to become a student of art. And just as in the present day everyone, even though he is not busied with natural science, yet pretends to be equipped with the essentials of physical knowledge, so it has become more or less obligatory for a cultivated man to possess some acquaintance with art, and the pretension to display oneself as a dilettante and connoisseur is pretty universal.

(a) If such information is really to be recognized as art-scholarship, it must be of various kinds and of wide range. The first necessity is an exact acquaintance with the immeasurable region of individual works of art of ancient and modern times, works which in part have actually perished, in part belong to distant countries or portions of the world, or which adverse fortune has withdrawn from one's own observation. Moreover, every work belongs to its *age*, to its *nation*, and to its environment, and depends upon particular historical and other ideas and aims. For this reason art-scholarship further requires a vast wealth of historical information of a very special kind, seeing that the individualized nature of the work of art is related to individual detail and demands special matter to aid in its comprehension and elucidation. And lastly, this kind of scholarship not only needs, like every other, a memory for information, but a vivid imagination in order to retain distinctly the images of artistic forms in all their different features, and especially in order to have them present to the mind for purposes of comparison with other works.

[xxv] (b) Within this kind of consideration, which is primarily historical, there soon emerge various points of view which cannot be lost sight of in contemplating a work of art, inasmuch as our judgements must be derived from them. Now these points of view, as in other sciences which have an empirical starting-point, when extracted and put together form universal criteria and rules, and, in a still further stage of formal generalization, *Theories of the arts*. This is not the place to go into detail about literature of this kind, and it may, therefore, suffice to mention a few writings in the most general way. For instance, there is Aristotle's *Poetics*, the theory of tragedy contained in which is still of interest; and to speak more particularly, among the ancients, Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Longinus' *Treatise on the Sublime* suffice to give a general idea of the way in which this kind of theorizing has been carried on. The general formulae which were abstracted by such writers were meant to stand especially as precepts and rules, according to which, particularly in times of degeneration of poetry and art, works of art were meant to be produced. The prescriptions, however, compiled by these physicians of art had even less assured

success than those of physicians whose aim was the restoration of health.

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Respecting theories of this kind, I propose merely to mention that, though *in detail* they contain much that is instructive, yet their remarks were abstracted from a very limited circle of artistic productions, which passed for *the* genuinely beautiful ones, but yet always belonged to a but narrow range of art. And again, such formulae are in part very trivial reflections which in their generality proceed to no establishment of particulars, although this is the matter of chief concern. [. . .]

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Another kind of interest was found, not in the express aim of directly causing the production of genuine works of art, but in the purpose which emerged of influencing men's judgement upon works of art by such theories, in short of *forming taste*. In this aspect, Home's *Elements of Criticism*, the writings of Batteux, and Ramler's *Introduction to the Fine Arts*, were works much read in their day. Taste in this sense has to do with arrangement and treatment, the harmony and finish of what belongs to the external aspect of a work of art. Besides, they brought in among the principles of taste views that belonged to the psychology that was then in vogue, and that had been drawn from empirical observation of capacities and activities of the soul, of the passions and their probable heightening, succession, etc. But it remains invariably the case that every man judges works of art, or characters, actions, and incidents according to the measure of his insight and his feelings; and as that formation of taste only touched what was meagre and external, and moreover drew its precepts only from a narrow range of works of art and from a *borné* culture of intellect and feelings, its whole sphere was inadequate, and incapable of seizing the inmost and the true, and of sharpening the eye for the apprehension thereof. [. . .]

Chapter III

The Conception of Artistic Beauty

Part I – The Work of Art as Made and as Sensuous

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After the above prefatory remarks, we approach closer to our subject, the philosophy of artistic beauty. Inasmuch as we are undertaking to treat it

scientifically we must begin with its *Conception*. [. . .]

The object of every science presents *prima facie* two aspects: in the first place, that such an object is; in the second place, *what* it is.

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In ordinary science little difficulty attaches to the first of these points. It might even, at first sight, look ridiculous, if the requirement were presented that in astronomy and physics it should be demonstrated that there was a sun, heavenly bodies, magnetic phenomena, etc. In these sciences, which have to do with what is given to sense, the objects are taken from external experience, and instead of demonstrating them it is thought sufficient to show them. Yet even within the non-philosophical sciences, doubts may arise about the existence of their objects, as e.g. in psychology, the science of mind, it may be doubted if there *is* a soul, a mind, i.e. something subjective, separate, and independent, distinct from what is material; or in theology, whether a God *is*. If, moreover, the objects are of subjective kind, i.e. are given only in the mind, and not as external sensuous objects, we are confronted by our conviction that there is nothing in the mind but what its own activity has produced. This brings up the accidental question whether men have produced this inner idea or perception in their minds or not, and even if the former is actually the case, whether they have not made the idea in question vanish again, or at any rate degraded it to a merely *subjective idea*, whose content has no natural and independent being. [. . .]

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What we know, to begin with, as a current idea of the work of art, comes under the three following general predicates:

1. We suppose the work of art to be no natural product, but brought to pass by means of human activity.
2. To be essentially made *for* man, and, indeed, to be more or less borrowed from the sensuous and addressed to man's sense.
3. To contain an *end*. [. . .]

[. . .] [T]he higher an artist ranks, the more profoundly ought he to represent the depths of heart and mind; and these are not known without learning them, but are only to be fathomed by the direction of a man's own mind to the inner and

outer world. So here, too, *study* is the means whereby the artist brings this content into his consciousness, and wins the matter and burden of his conceptions.

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In this respect one art may need the consciousness and cognition of such matter more than others. Music, for instance, which concerns itself only with the undefined movement of the inward spiritual nature, and deals with musical sounds as, so to speak, feeling without thought, needs little or no spiritual content to be present in consciousness. It is for this reason that musical talent generally announces itself in very early youth, while the head is still empty and the heart has been but little moved, and is capable of attaining to a very considerable height in early years, before mind and life have experience of themselves. And again, as a matter of fact we often enough see very great expertness in musical composition, as also in execution, subsist along with remarkable barrenness of mind and character. The reverse is the case with poetry. In poetry all depends on the representation – which must be full of matter and thought – of man, of his profounder interests, and of the powers that move him; and therefore mind and heart themselves must be richly and profoundly educated by life, experience, and reflection, before genius can bring to pass anything mature, substantial, and self-complete. Goethe's and Schiller's first productions are of an immaturity, and even of rudeness and barbarism, that are absolutely terrifying. [. . .]

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(c) A third view, which concerns the idea of the work of art as a product of human activity, refers to the position of such a work towards the external appearances of nature. It was an obvious opinion for the common consciousness to adopt on this head, that the work of art made by man ranked *below* the product of nature. The work of art has no feeling in itself, and is not through and through a living thing, but, regarded as an external object, is dead. But we are wont to prize the living more than the dead. We must admit, of course, that the work of art has not in itself movement and life. An animated being in nature is within and without an organization appropriately elaborated down to all its minutest parts, while the work of art attains the semblance of animation on its surface only, but within is common stone, or wood and canvas, or, as in the case of

poetry, is idea, uttering itself in speech and letters. But this aspect, viz. its external existence, is not what makes a work into a production of fine art; it is a work of art only in as far as, being the offspring of mind, it continues to belong to the realm of mind, has received the baptism of the spiritual, and only represents that which has been moulded in harmony with mind. A human interest, the spiritual value which attaches to an incident, to an individual character, to an action in its plot and in its dénouement, is apprehended in the work of art, and exhibited more purely and transparently than is possible on the soil of common unartistic reality. This gives the work of art a higher rank than anything produced by nature, which has not sustained this passage through the mind. So, for instance, by reason of the feeling and insight of which a landscape as depicted by an artist is a manifestation, such a work of mind assumes a higher rank than the mere natural landscape. For everything spiritual is better than anything natural. At any rate, no existence in nature is able, like art, to represent divine ideals.

Upon that which, in works of art, the mind borrows from its own inner life it is able, even on the side of external existence, to confer *permanence*; whereas the individual living thing of nature is transient, vanishing, and mutable in its aspect, while the work of art persists. Though, indeed, it is not mere permanence, but the accentuation of the character which animation by mind confers, that constitutes its genuine pre-eminence as compared with natural reality.

Nevertheless, this higher rank assigned to the work of art is in turn disputed by another idea of the common consciousness. It is said that nature and its products are a work of God, created by his goodness and wisdom, whereas the work of art is *merely* a human production, made after man's devising by man's hands. In this antithesis between natural production as a divine creation and human activity as a merely finite creation, we at once come upon the misconception that God does *not* work in man and through man, but limits the range of his activity to nature alone. This false opinion is to be entirely abandoned if we mean to penetrate the true conception of art. Indeed, in opposition to such an idea, we must adhere to the very reverse, believing that God is more honoured by what mind does or makes than by the productions or formations of nature.

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For not only is there a divinity in man, but in him it is operative under a form that is appropriate to the essence of God, in a mode quite other and higher than in nature. God is a Spirit, and it is only in man that the medium through which the divine element passes has the form of conscious spirit, that actively realizes itself. In nature the corresponding medium is the unconscious, sensible, and external, which is far below consciousness in value. In the products of art God is operative neither more nor less than in the phenomena of nature; but the divine element, as it makes itself known in the work of art, has attained, as being generated out of the mind, an adequate thoroughfare for its existence; while existence in the unconscious sensuousness of nature is not a mode of appearance adequate to the Divine Being.

[XLVIII] (d) Granting, then, that the work of art is made by man as a creation of mind, we come to the last question, which will enable us to draw a deeper result from what has been said. What is man's need to produce works of art? On the one hand the production may be regarded as a mere toy of chance and of man's fancies, that might just as well be let alone as pursued. For, it may be said, there are other and better means for effecting that which is the aim of art, and man bears in him interests that are yet higher and of more import than art has power to satisfy. But, on the other hand, art appears to arise from the higher impulse and to satisfy the higher needs, at times, indeed, even the highest, the absolute need of man, being wedded to the religious interests of whole epochs and peoples, and to their most universal intuitions respecting the world. This inquiry concerning the not contingent but absolute need of art we cannot as yet answer completely, seeing that it is more concrete than any shape which could here be given to the answer. We must, therefore, content ourselves for the present with merely establishing the following points.

[XLIX] The universal and absolute need out of which art, on its formal side, arises has its source in the fact that man is a *thinking* consciousness, i.e. that he draws out of himself, and makes explicit *for himself*, that which he is, and, generally, whatever is. The things of nature are only *immediate and single*, but man as mind *reduplicates* himself, inasmuch as *prima facie* he is like the things of nature, but in the second place just as really is *for himself*,

perceives himself, has ideas of himself, thinks himself, and only thus is active self-realizedness. This consciousness of himself man obtains in a twofold way: *in the first place theoretically*, in as far as he has inwardly to bring himself into his own consciousness, with all that moves in the human breast, all that stirs and works therein, and, generally, to observe and form an idea of himself, to fix before himself what thought ascertains to be his real being, and, in what is summoned out of his inner self as in what is received from without, to recognize only himself. Secondly, man is realized for himself by *practical* activity, inasmuch as he has the impulse, in the medium which is directly given to him, and externally presented before him, to produce himself, and therein at the same time to recognize himself. This purpose he achieves by the modification of external things upon which he impresses the seal of his inner being, and then finds repeated in them his own characteristics. Man does this in order as a free subject to strip the outer world of its stubborn foreignness, and to enjoy in the shape and fashion of things a mere external reality of himself. Even the child's first impulse involves this practical modification of external things. A boy throws stones into the river, and then stands admiring the circles that trace themselves on the water, as an effect in which he attains the sight of something that is his own doing. This need traverses the most manifold phenomena, up to the mode of self-production in the medium of external things as it is known to us in the work of art. And it is not only external things that man treats in this way, but himself no less, i.e. his own natural form, which he does not leave as he finds it, but alters of set purpose. This is the cause of all ornament and decoration, though it may be as barbarous, as tasteless, as utterly disfiguring or even destructive as crushing Chinese ladies' feet, or as slitting the ears and lips. It is only among cultivated men that change of the figure, of behaviour, and of every kind and mode of self-utterance emanates from spiritual education.

The universal need for expression in art lies, therefore, in man's rational impulse to exalt the inner and outer world into a spiritual consciousness for himself, as an object in which he recognizes his own self. He satisfies the need of this spiritual freedom when he makes all that exists explicit for himself *within*, and in a corresponding way realizes

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this his explicit self *without*, evoking thereby, in this reduplication of himself, what is in him into vision and into knowledge for his own mind and for that of others. This is the free rationality of man, in which, as all action and knowledge, so also art has its ground and necessary origin. The specific need of art, however, in contradistinction to other action, political or moral, to religious imagination and to scientific cognition, we shall consider later.

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2. We have so far been considering that aspect of the work of art in which it is made by man. We have now to pass on to its second characteristic, that it is made for man's *sense*, and for this reason is more or less borrowed from the sensuous.

(a) This reflection has furnished occasion for the consideration to be advanced that fine art is intended to arouse feeling, and indeed more particularly the feeling which we find suits us – that is, pleasant feeling. Looking at the question thus, men have treated the investigation of fine art as an investigation of the feelings, and asked what feelings it must be held that art ought to evoke – fear, for example, and compassion; and then, how these could be pleasant – how, for example, the contemplation of misfortune could produce satisfaction. This tendency of reflection is traceable particularly to Moses Mendelssohn's times, and many such discussions are to be found in his writings. Yet such an investigation did not lead men far, for feeling is the indefinite dull region of the mind; what is felt remains wrapped in the form of the most abstract individual subjectivity, and therefore the distinctions of feeling are also quite abstract, and are not distinctions of the actual object-matter itself. For instance, fear, anxiety, alarm, terror, are no doubt of one and the same sort of feeling variously modified, but in part are mere quantitative heightenings, in part are forms which in themselves have nothing to do with their content itself, but are indifferent to it. [. . .]

For a work of art, owing to its nature as at once material and individual, is essentially originated by particular conditions of the most various kinds, to which belong especially the time and place of its production, then the peculiar individuality of the artist, and in particular the grade of technical development attained by his art. Attention to all these aspects is indispensable to distinct and thorough insight and cognition, and even to the enjoyment of a work of art;

it is with them that connoisseurship, or art-scholarship, is chiefly occupied; and all that it can do for us in its own way is to be accepted with gratitude. Yet, though such scholarship is entitled to rank as something essential, still it ought not to be taken for the sole or supreme element in the relation which the mind adopts towards a work of art, and towards art in general. For art-scholarship (and this is its defective side) is capable of resting in an acquaintance with purely external aspects, such as technical or historical details, etc., and of guessing but little, or even knowing absolutely nothing, of the true and real nature of a work of art. It may even form a disparaging estimate of the value of more profound considerations in comparison with purely positive, technical, and historical information. Still, even so, art-scholarship, if only it is of a genuine kind, at least strives after definite grounds and information, and an intelligent judgement, with which is closely conjoined the more precise distinction of the different, even if partly external, aspects in a work of art, and the estimation of their importance.

(d) After these remarks upon the modes of study which have arisen out of that aspect of a work of art in which, being a sensuous object, it is invested with a relation to man as a sensuous being, we will now consider this aspect in its more essential relation to art as such, and so (α) partly as regards the work of art as object, (β) partly with respect to the subjectivity of the artist, his genius, talent, and so on; but without entering into matter relative to these points that can only proceed from the knowledge of art in its universal idea. For we are not yet on genuinely scientific ground, but have only reached the province of external reflection. [LIV]

(α) The work of art then, of course, presents itself to sensuous apprehension. It is addressed to sensuous feeling, outer or inner, to sensuous perception and imagination, just as is the nature that surrounds us without, or our own sensitive nature within. Even a speech, for instance, may be addressed to sensuous imagination and feeling. Notwithstanding, the work of art is not only for the *sensuous* apprehension as sensuous object, but its position is of such a kind that as sensuous it is at the same time essentially addressed to the *mind*, that the mind is meant to be affected by it, and to find some sort of satisfaction in it. [LIV]

This intention of the work of art explains how it is in no way meant to be a natural product and to possess natural life, whether a natural product is to be ranked higher or lower than a *mere* work of art, as it is often called in a depreciatory sense.

For the sensuous aspect of the work of art has a right to existence only in as far as it exists for man's mind, but not in as far as *qua* sensuous thing it has separate existence by itself. If we examine more closely in what way the sensuous is presented to man, we find that what is sensuous may bear various relations to the mind.

[LVI] ($\alpha\alpha$) The lowest mode of apprehension, and that least appropriate to the mind, is purely sensuous apprehension. It consists naturally in mere looking, listening, feeling, just as in seasons of mental fatigue it may often be entertaining to go about without thought, and just to hear and look around us. The mind, however, does not rest in the mere apprehension of external things by sight and hearing, it makes them objects for its own inner nature, which then is itself impelled in a correspondingly sensuous form to realize itself in the things, and relates itself to them as *desire*. In this appetitive relation to the outer world, the man stands as a sensuous particular over against the things as likewise particulars; he does not open his mind to them with general ideas as a thinking being, but has relations dictated by particular impulses and interests to the objects as themselves particulars, and preserves himself in them, inasmuch as he uses them, consumes them, and puts in act his self-satisfaction by sacrificing them to it. In this negative relation desire requires for itself not merely the superficial appearance of external things, but themselves in their concrete sensuous existence. Mere pictures of the wood that it wants to use, or of the animals that it wants to eat, would be of no service to desire. Just as little is it possible for desire to let the object subsist in its freedom. For its impulse urges it just precisely to destroy this independence and freedom of external things, and to show that they are only there to be destroyed and consumed. But, at the same time, the subject himself, as entangled in the particular limited and valueless interests of his desires, is neither free in himself, for he does not determine himself out of the essential universality and rationality of his will, nor free in relation to the outer world, for his desire remains essentially determined by things, and related to

them. This relation of desire is not that in which man stands to the work of art. He allows it to subsist as an object, free and independent, and enters into relation with it apart from desire, as with an object which only appeals to the theoretic side of the mind. For this reason the work of art, although it has sensuous existence, yet, in this point of view, does not require concrete sensuous existence and natural life; indeed, it even *ought* not to remain on such a level, seeing that it has to satisfy only the interests of mind, and is bound to exclude from itself all desire. Hence it is, indeed, that practical desire rates individual things in nature, organic and inorganic, which are serviceable to it, higher than works of art, which reveal themselves to be useless for its purpose, and enjoyable only for other modes of mind.

($\beta\beta$) A second mode in which the externally present may be related to the mind is, in contrast with singular sensuous perception and desire, the purely theoretical relation to the *Intelligence*. The theoretic contemplation of things has no interest in consuming them as particulars, in satisfying itself sensuously, and in preserving itself by their means, but rather in becoming acquainted with them in their universality, in finding their inner being and law, and in conceiving them in terms of their notion. Therefore the theoretical interest lets the single things be, and holds aloof from them as sensuous particulars, because this sensuous particularity is not what the contemplation exercised by the intelligence looks for. For the rational intelligence does not belong, as do the desires, to the individual subject as such, but only to the individual as at the same time in his nature universal. In as far as man has relation to things in respect of this universality, it is his universal reason which attempts to find himself in nature, and thereby to reproduce the inner essence of things, which sensuous existence, though having its ground therein, cannot immediately display. But again, this theoretic interest, the satisfaction of which is the work of science, is in the scientific form no more shared by art than the latter makes common cause with the impulse of the purely practical desires. Science may, no doubt, start from the sensuous thing in its individuality, and may possess a sensuous idea of the way in which such an individual presents itself in its individual colour, shape, size, etc. Still, this isolated sensuous thing, as such, has no further relation to the mind,

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inasmuch as the intelligence aims at the universal, the law, the thought and notion of the object. Not only, therefore, does it abandon all intercourse with the thing as a given individual, but transforms it within the mind, making a concrete object of sense into an abstract matter of thought, and so into something quite other than the same object *qua* sensuous phenomenon. The artistic interest, as distinguished from science, does not act thus. Artistic contemplation accepts the work of art just as it displays itself *qua* external object, in immediate determinateness and sensuous individuality clothed in colour, figure, and sound, or as a single isolated perception, etc., and does not go so far beyond the immediate appearance of objectivity which is presented before it, as to aim, like science, at apprehending the notion of such an objective appearance as a universal notion.

Thus, the interest of art distinguishes itself from the practical interest of *desire* by the fact that it permits its object to subsist freely and in independence, while desire utilizes it in its own service by its destruction. On the other hand, artistic contemplation differs from theoretical consideration by the scientific intelligence, in cherishing interest for the object as an individual existence, and not setting to work to transmute it into its universal thought and notion.

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(γγ) It follows, then, from the above, that though the sensuous must be present in a work of art, yet it must only appear as surface and *semblance* of the sensuous. For, in the sensuous aspect of a work of art, the mind seeks neither the concrete framework of matter, that empirically thorough completeness and development of the organism which desire demands, nor the universal and merely ideal thought. What it requires is sensuous presence, which, while not ceasing to be sensuous, is to be liberated from the apparatus of its merely material nature. And thus the sensuous in works of art is exalted to the rank of a mere *semblance* in comparison with the immediate existence of things in nature, and the work of art occupies the mean between what is immediately sensuous and ideal thought. This semblance of the sensuous presents itself to the mind externally as the shape, the visible look, and the sonorous vibration of things - supposing that the mind leaves the objects uninterfered with (physically), but yet does not descend into their inner essence (by abstract thought), for if it did so, it would

entirely destroy their external existence as separate individuals *for it*. For this reason the sensuous aspect of art only refers to the two *theoretical* senses of *sight* and *hearing*, while smell, taste, and feeling remain excluded from being sources of artistic enjoyment. For smell, taste, and feeling have to do with matter as such, and with its immediate sensuous qualities; smell with material volatilization in air, taste with the material dissolution of substance, and feeling with warmth, coldness, smoothness, etc. On this account these senses cannot have to do with the objects of art, which are destined to maintain themselves in their actual independent existence, and admit of no purely sensuous relation. The pleasant for these latter senses is not the beautiful in art. Thus art on its sensuous side purposely produces no more than a shadow-world of shapes, sounds, and imaginable ideas; and it is absolutely out of the question to maintain that it is owing to simple powerlessness and to the limitations on his actions that man, when evoking worlds of art into existence, fails to present more than the mere surface of the sensuous, than mere *schemata*. In art, these sensuous shapes and sounds present themselves, not simply for their own sake and for that of their immediate structure, but with the purpose of affording in that shape satisfaction to higher spiritual interests, seeing that they are powerful to call forth a response and echo in the mind from all the depths of consciousness. It is thus that, in art, the sensuous is *spiritualized*, i.e. the *spiritual* appears in sensuous shape.

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(β) But for this very reason we have a product of art only in so far as it has found a passage through the mind, and has been generated by spiritually productive activity. This leads us to the other question which we have to answer - how, that is, the sensuous side, which is indispensable to art, is operative in the artist as a productive state of the subject or person. This, the method and fashion of production, contains in itself as a subjective activity just the same properties which we found objectively present in the work of art; it must be a spiritual activity which, nevertheless, at the same time has in itself the element of sensuousness and immediateness. It is neither, on the one hand, purely mechanical work, as mere unconscious skill in sensuous sleight of hand, or a formal activity according to fixed rules learnt by rote; nor is it, on the other hand, a scientific productive

process, which passes from sense to abstract ideas and thoughts, or exercises itself exclusively in the element of pure thinking; rather the spiritual and the sensuous side must in artistic production be as one. For instance, it would be possible in poetical creation to try and proceed by first apprehending the theme to be treated as a prosaic thought, and by then putting it into pictorial ideas, and into rhyme, and so forth; so that the pictorial element would simply be hung upon the abstract reflections as an ornament or decoration. Such a process could only produce bad poetry, for in it there would be operative as two *separate activities* that which in artistic production has its right place only as undivided unity. This genuine mode of production constitutes the activity of artistic *fancy*. It is the rational element which, *qua* spirit, only exists in as far as it actively extrudes itself into consciousness, but yet does not array before it what it bears within itself till it does so in sensuous form. This activity has, therefore, a spiritual import, which, however, it embodies in sensuous shape. Such a process may be compared with the habit even of a man with great experience of the world, or, again, with that of a man of *esprit* or wit, who, although he has complete knowledge of the main stakes of life, of the substantive interests that hold men together, of what moves them, and of what is the power that they recognize, yet neither has himself apprehended this content in the form of general rules, nor is able to explain it to others in general reflections, but makes plain to himself and to others what occupies his consciousness always in particular cases, whether real or invented, in adequate instances, and the like. For in his ideas, everything shapes itself into concrete images, determinate in time and place, to which, therefore, names and other external circumstances of all kinds must not be wanting. Yet such a kind of imagination rather rests on the recollection of states that he has gone through, and of experiences that have befallen him, than is creative in its own strength. His recollection preserves and reproduces the individuality and external fashion of occurrences that had such and such results with all their external circumstances, and prevents the universal from emerging in its own shape. But the productive fancy of the *artist* is the fancy of a great mind and heart, the apprehension and creation of ideas and of shapes, and, indeed, the exhibition of the

profoundest and most universal human interests in the definite sensuous mould of pictorial representation. From this it follows at once, that in one aspect Fancy unquestionably rests on natural gifts – speaking generally, on talent – because its mode of production requires a sensuous medium. [...]

Part II – The End of Art

3. The question then arises, what the interest or the *End* is which man proposes to himself when he reproduces such a content in the form of works of art. This was the third point of view which we set before us with reference to the work of art, and the closer discussion of which will finally make the transition to the actual and true conception of art. [LXI]

If in this aspect we glance at the common consciousness, a current idea which may occur to us is –

(a) The principle of the *imitation of nature*. [LXII] According to this view the essential purpose of art consists in imitation, in the sense of a facility in copying natural forms as they exist in a way that corresponds precisely to them; and the success of such a representation, exactly corresponding to nature, is supposed to be what affords complete satisfaction.

(α) This definition contains, *prima facie*, nothing beyond the purely formal aim that whatever already exists in the external world, just as it is therein, is now to be made a second time by man as a copy of the former, as well as he can do it with the means at his command. But we may at once regard this repetition as –

(αα) A *superfluous* labour, seeing that the things which pictures, theatrical representations, etc., imitate and represent – animals, natural scenes, incidents in human life – are before us in other cases already, in our own gardens or our own houses, or in cases within our closer or more remote circle of acquaintance. And, looking more closely, we may regard this superfluous labour as a presumptuous sport which –

(ββ) Comes far short of nature. For art is restricted in its means of representation; and can produce only *one-sided* deceptions, i.e. for instance, a semblance of reality addressed to one sense only; and in fact, it invariably gives rise, if it rests in the formal purpose of *mere imitation*, to a

mere parody of life, instead of a genuine vitality. Just so the Turks, being Muhammadans, tolerate, as is well known, no pictures copied from men or the like; and when James Bruce, on his journey to Abyssinia, showed paintings of fish to a Turk, the man was amazed at first, but soon enough made answer: 'If this fish shall rise up against you on the last day, and say, "You have created for me a body, but no living soul", how will you defend yourself against such an accusation?' The prophet, moreover, it is recorded in the Sunna, said to the two women, Ommi Habiba and Ommi Selma, who told him of pictures in Ethiopian churches – 'These pictures will accuse their authors on the day of judgement!'

There are, no doubt, as well, examples of completely deceptive imitation. Zeuxis' painted grapes have from antiquity downward been taken to be the triumph of this principle of the imitation of nature, because the story is that living doves pecked at them. We might add to this ancient example the modern one of Büttner's monkey, which bit in pieces a painted cockchafer in Rösel's *Diversions of the Insect World*, and was pardoned by his master, in spite of his having thereby spoilt a beautiful copy of this valuable work, because of this proof of the excellence of the pictures. But when we reflect on these and similar instances, it must at once occur to us that, in place of commending works of art because they have *actually* deceived *even* pigeons and monkeys, we ought simply to censure the people who mean to exalt a work of art by predicating, as its highest and ultimate quality, so poor an effect as this. In general, we may sum up by saying that, as a matter of mere imitation, art cannot maintain a rivalry with nature, and, if it tries, must look like a worm trying to crawl after an elephant.

(γγ) Considering the unvarying failure – comparative failure, at least – of imitation when contrasted with the original in nature, there remains as end nothing beyond our pleasure in the sleight of hand which can produce something so like nature. And it is doubtless open to man to be pleased at producing over again what is already present in its own right, by his labour, skill, and industry. But enjoyment and admiration, even of this kind, naturally grow frigid or chilled precisely in proportion to the resemblance of the copy to the natural type, or are even converted into tedium and repugnance. There are portraits

which, as has been wittily said, are sickeningly like; and Kant adduces another instance relative to this pleasure in imitation as such, viz. that we soon grow tired of a man – and there are such men – who is able to mimic the nightingale's strain quite perfectly; and as soon as it is discovered that a man is producing the notes, we are at once weary of the song. We then recognize in it nothing but a conjuring trick, neither the free production of nature, nor a work of art; for we expect from the free productive capacity of human beings something quite other than such music as this, which only interests us when, as is the case with the nightingale's note, it gushes forth from the creature's own vitality without special purpose, and yet recalls the utterance of human feeling. In general, such delight at our skill in mimicking can be but limited, and it becomes man better to take delight in what he produces out of himself. In this sense the invention of any unimportant and technical product has the higher value, and man may be prouder of having invented the hammer, the nail, and so forth, than of achieving feats of mimicry. For this fervour of abstract copying is to be evened with the feat of the man who had taught himself to throw lentils through a small opening without missing. He displayed this skill of his before Alexander, and Alexander presented him with a bushel of lentils as a reward for his frivolous and meaningless art.

(B) Moreover, seeing that the principle of imitation is purely formal, to make it the end has the result that *objective beauty* itself disappears. For the question is in that case no longer of *what nature* that is which is to be copied, but only whether it is *correctly* copied. The object and content of the beautiful comes then to be regarded as matter of entire indifference. That is to say, if we go outside the principle and speak of a difference of beauty and ugliness in considering beasts, men, landscapes, actions, or characters, this must nevertheless, in presence of the maxim in question, be set down as a distinction that does not belong particularly to art, for which nothing is left but abstract imitation. In this case the above-mentioned lack of a criterion in dealing with the endless forms of nature reduces us, as regards the selection of objects and their distinction in beauty and ugliness, to subjective *taste* as an ultimate fact, which accepts no rule and admits of no

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discussion. And, in fact, if in selecting objects for representation we start from what *men* think beautiful or ugly, and therefore deserving artistic imitation – that is, from their taste – then all circles of natural objects open to us, and not one of them will be likely to fail of a patron. Among men, for instance, it is the case that at any rate every bridegroom thinks his bride beautiful, and indeed, perhaps, he alone; though not, it may be, every husband his wife; and that subjective taste for such beauty has no fixed rule one may hold to be the good fortune of both parties. If we, moreover, look quite beyond individuals and their accidental taste, to the taste of nations, this again is full of extreme diversity and contrast. How often we hear it said that a European beauty would not please a Chinese or even a Hottentot, in as far as the Chinaman has quite a different conception of beauty from the Negro, and the Negro in turn from the European, and so forth. Indeed, if we look at the works of art of those extra-European peoples – their images of the gods, for instance – which their fancy has originated as venerable and sublime, they may appear to us as the most gruesome idols, and their music may sound to our ears as the most horrible noise; while they, on their side, will regard our sculptures, paintings, and musical productions as trivial or ugly.

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(γ) But even if we abstract from an objective principle of art, and if beauty is to be based on subjective and individual taste, we shall still soon find on the side of art itself that the imitation of nature, which certainly appeared to be a universal principle and one guaranteed by high authority, is at any rate not to be accepted in this universal and merely abstract form. For if we look at the different arts it will at once be admitted that even if painting and sculpture represent objects which appear like those of nature, or the type of which is essentially borrowed from nature, yet works of architecture on the other hand – and architecture belongs to the fine arts – and the productions of poetry, in as far as they do not confine themselves to mere description, are by no means to be called imitations of nature. At least, if we desired to maintain the principle as valid in the case of these latter arts, we should have to make a long circuit by conditioning the proposition in various ways, and reducing the so-called truth at any rate to probability. But if we admitted probability we

should again be met by a great difficulty in determining what is probable and what is not; and still, moreover, one would neither consent nor find it possible to exclude from poetry all wholly arbitrary and completely original imaginations.

The end of art must, therefore, lie in something different from the purely formal imitation of what we find given, which in any case can bring to the birth only *tricks* and not *works* of art. It is, indeed, an element essential to the work of art to have natural shapes for its foundation; seeing that its representation is in the medium of external and therefore of natural phenomena. In painting, for instance, it is an important study to know how to copy with precision the colours in their relations to one another, the effects of light, reflections, etc., and, no less, the forms and figures of objects down to their subtlest characteristics. It is in this respect chiefly that the principle of naturalism in general and of copying nature has recovered its influence in modern times. Its aim is to recall an art which has grown feeble and indistinct to the vigour and crispness of nature; or, again, to invoke against the purely arbitrary and artificial conventionalism, as unnatural as it was inartistic, into which art had strayed, the uniform, direct, and solidly coherent sequences of nature. But however true it is that there is something right in this endeavour from one point of view, yet still the naturalism at which it aims is not as such the substantive and primary concern that underlies fine art. And, therefore, although external appearance in the shape of natural reality constitutes an essential condition of art, yet, nevertheless, neither is the given natural world its *rule*, nor is the mere imitation of external appearance as external its *end*.

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(b) The further question then arises – What is the true content of art, and with what aim is this content to be presented? On this subject our consciousness supplies us with the common opinion that it is the task and aim of art to bring in contact with our sense, our feeling, our inspiration, *all* that finds a place in the mind of man. Art, it is thought, should realize in us that familiar saying, ‘Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto.’ Its aim is therefore placed in arousing and animating the slumbering emotions, inclinations, and passions; in filling the *heart*, in forcing the human being, whether cultured or uncultured, to feel the whole range of what man’s soul in its inmost and

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secret corners has power to experience and to create, and all that is able to move and to stir the human breast in its depths and in its manifold aspects and possibilities; to present as a delight to emotion and to perception all that the mind possesses of real and lofty in its thought and in the Idea - all the splendour of the noble, the eternal, and the true; and no less to make intelligible misfortune and misery, wickedness and crime; to make men realize the inmost nature of all that is shocking and horrible, as also of all pleasure and delight; and, finally, to set imagination roving in idle toying of fancy, and luxuriating in the seductive spells of sense-stimulating visions. This endlessly varied content, it is held, art is bound to embrace, partly in order to complete the natural experience in which our external existence consists, and partly with the general aim of provoking the passions of our nature, both in order that the experiences of life may not leave us unmoved, and because we desire to attain to a receptivity that welcomes all phenomena. Now, such a stimulus is not given in this sphere by actual experience itself, but can only come by the semblance thereof, by art, that is, deceptively substituting its creations for reality. The possibility of this deception by means of artistic semblance rests on the fact that all reality must, for man, traverse the medium of perception and ideas, and cannot otherwise penetrate the feelings and the will. In this process it is quite indifferent whether his attention is claimed by immediate external reality, or whether this effect is produced by another means - that is, by images, symbols, and ideas, containing or representing *the content* of reality. Man can frame to himself ideas of things that are not actual as though they were actual. Hence it is all the same to our feelings whether external reality or only the semblance of it is the means of bringing in contact with us a situation, a relation, or the import of a life. Either mode suffices to awaken our response to its burden, in grief and in rejoicing, in pathos and in horror, and in traversing the emotions and the passions of wrath, hatred, compassion, of anxiety, fear, love, reverence, and admiration, or of the desire of honour and of fame.

This awakening of all feelings in us, the dragging of the heart through the whole significance of life, the realization of all such inner movements by means of a presented exterior consisting merely in

deception - all this was what, from the point of view which we have been considering, constituted the peculiar and pre-eminent power of art.

Now, as this mode of treatment credits art with the vocation of impressing on the heart and on the imagination good and bad alike, and of strengthening man to the noblest, as of enervating him to the most sensuous and selfish emotions, it follows that the task set before art is still purely formal, and so it would have no certain purpose, but would merely furnish the empty form for every possible kind of significance and content.

(c) It is a fact that art does include this formal side, in that it has power to present every possible subject-matter in artistic dress, before perception and feeling, just exactly as argumentative reflection has the power of manipulating all possible objects and modes of action, and of furnishing them with reasons and justifications. But when we admit so great a variety of content we are at once met by the remark that the manifold feelings and ideas, which art aims at provoking or reinforcing, intersect and contradict, and by mutual interference cancel one another. Indeed, in this aspect, in so far as art inspires men to directly opposite emotions, it only magnifies the contradiction of our feelings and passions, and either sets them staggering like Bacchantes, or passes into sophistry and scepticism, in the same way as argumentation. This diversity of the material of art itself compels us, therefore, not to be content with so formal an aim for it, seeing that rationality forces its way into this wild diversity, and demands to see the emergence of a higher and more universal purpose from these elements in spite of their self-contradiction, and to be assured of its being attained. Just in the same way the State and the social life of men are, of course, credited with the purpose that in them *all* human capacities and *all* individual powers are to be developed and to find utterance in *all* directions and with *all* tendencies. But in opposition to so formal a view there at once arises the question in what *unity* these manifold formations must be comprehended, and what *single end* they must have for their fundamental idea and ultimate purpose.

As such an end, reflection soon suggests the notion that art has the capacity and the function of mitigating the fierceness of the desires.

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(α) In respect to this first idea, we have only to ascertain in what feature peculiar to art it is that the capacity lies of eliminating brutality and taming and educating the impulses, desires, and passions. Brutality in general has its reason in a direct selfishness of the impulses, which go to work right away, and exclusively for the satisfaction of their concupiscence. Now, desire is most savage and imperious in proportion as, being isolated and narrow, it occupies the *whole man*, so that he does not retain the power of separating himself as a universal being from this determinateness, and becoming aware of himself as universal. Even if the man in such a case says, 'The passion is stronger than I', it is true that the abstract I is then separated for consciousness from the particular passion; but still only in a formal way, inasmuch as this separation is only made in order to pronounce that, against the power of passion, the I as such is of no account whatever. The savageness of passion consists, therefore, in the oneness of the I as universal with the limited content of its desires, so that the man has no will outside this particular passion. Now, such brutality and untamed violence of passion is softened through art, to begin with, by the mere fact that it brings before the man as an idea what in such a state he feels and does. And even if art restricts itself to merely setting up pictures of the passions before the mind's eye, or even if it were actually to flatter them, still this is by itself enough to have a softening power, inasmuch as the man is thereby at least *made aware*, of what, apart from such presentation, he simply *is*. For then the man observes his impulses and inclinations, and whereas before they bore him on without power of reflection, he now sees them outside himself, and begins already to be free from them, in so far as they form an object which he contrasts with himself. Hence it may frequently be the case with the artist that when attacked by grief he softens and weakens the intensity of his own feelings in its effect on his own mind by representing it in art. Tears, even, are enough to bring comfort; the man, who to begin with is utterly sunk and concentrated in grief, is able thus, at any rate, to utter in a direct fashion this his inner state. Still more of a relief, however, is the utterance of what is within in words, images, pictures, sounds, and shapes. For this reason it was a good old custom at deaths and funerals to appoint wailing women,

in order to bring the grief before the mind in its utterance, Manifestations of sympathy, too, hold up the content of man's misfortune to his view; when it is much talked about he is forced to reflect upon it, and is thereby relieved. And so it has always been held that to weep or to speak one's fill is a means to obtain freedom from the oppressive weight of care, or at least to find momentary relief for the heart. Hence the mitigation of the violence of passion has for its universal reason that man is released from his immediate sunkenness in a feeling, and becomes conscious of it as of something external to him, towards which he must now enter into an *ideal* relation. Art, by means of its representations, while remaining within the sensuous sphere, delivers man at the same time from the power of sensuousness. Of course we may often hear those favourite phrases about man's duty being to remain in immediate oneness with nature, but such oneness in its abstraction is simply and solely coarseness and savagery; and art, in the very process of dissolving this oneness for man, is raising him with gentle hand above and away from mere sunkenness in nature. Man's mode of occupying himself with works of art is always purely contemplative, and educates thereby, in the first place, no doubt, merely attention to the representations themselves, but then, going beyond this, it cultivates attention to their significance, the power of comparison with other contents, and receptivity for the general consideration of them, and for the points of view which it involves.

(β) To the above there attaches itself in natural connection the second characteristic which has been ascribed to art as its essential purpose, viz. the *purification* of the passions, instruction and *moral* perfecting. For the characteristic that art was to bridle savageness and educate the passions remained quite abstract and general, so that a question must again arise about a *determinate* kind and an essential *end* of this education. [LXIX]

($\alpha\alpha$) The doctrine of the purification of passion suffers indeed under the same defect as the above doctrine of the mitigation of the desires; yet, when more closely looked at, it at any rate arrives at the point of accentuating the fact that the representations of art may be held to lack a standard by which their worth or unworthiness could be measured. This standard simply means their effectiveness in separating pure from impure

in the passions. It therefore requires a content that has capacity to exercise this purifying power, and, in as far as the production of such an effect is taken to constitute the substantive end of art, it must follow that the purifying content must be brought before consciousness in its *universality* and *essentiality*.

(ββ) In this latter aspect the end of art has been pronounced to be that it should *teach*. Thus, on the one side, the peculiar character of art would consist in the movement of the emotions and in the satisfaction which lies in this movement, even in fear, compassion, in painful pathos and shock – that is to say, in the satisfying engagement of the emotions and passions, and to that extent in a complacency, entertainment, and delight in the objects of art, in their representation and effect; but, on the other side, this purpose (of art) is held to find its higher standard only in its instructiveness, in the *fabula docet*, and thus in the useful influence which the work of art succeeds in exerting on the subject. In this respect the Horatian saw, ‘Et prodesse volunt et delectare poetae’ (‘Poets aim at utility and entertainment alike’), contains, concentrated in a few words, all that has subsequently been elaborated in infinite degrees, and diluted into the uttermost extreme of insipidity as a doctrine of art. As regards such instruction we have, then, to ask, whether it is meant to be directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly contained in the work of art.

If, speaking generally, we are concerned about a purpose which is universal and not contingent, it follows that this purpose, considering the essentially spiritual nature of art, cannot but be itself spiritual, and indeed, moreover, one which is not contingent, but actual in its nature and for its own sake. Such a purpose in relation to teaching could only consist in bringing before consciousness, by help of the work of art, a really and explicitly significant spiritual content. From this point of view it is to be asserted that the higher art ranks itself, the more it is bound to admit into itself such a content as this, and that only in the essence of such a content can it find the standard which determines whether what is expressed is appropriate or inappropriate. Art was, in fact, the first *instructress* of peoples.

But the purpose of instruction may be treated as *purpose*, to such a degree that the universal nature of the represented content is doomed to be

exhibited and expounded directly and obviously as abstract proposition, prosaic reflection, or general theorem, and not merely in an indirect way in the concrete form of a work of art. By such a severance the sensuous plastic form, which is just what makes the work of art a work of *art*, becomes a mere otiose accessory, a husk which is expressly pronounced to be mere husk, a semblance expressly pronounced to be mere semblance. But thereby the very nature of the work of art is distorted. For the work of art ought to bring a content before the mind’s eye, not in its generality as such, but with this generality made absolutely individual, and sensuously particularized. If the work of art does not proceed from this principle, but sets in relief its generalized aspect with the purpose of abstract instruction, then the imaginative and sensuous aspect is only an external and superfluous adornment, and the work of art is a thing divided against itself, in which form and content no longer appear as grown into one. In that case the sensuously individual and the spiritually general are become external to one another.

And further, if the purpose of art is limited to this *didactic* utility, then its other aspect, that of pleasure, entertainment, and delight, is pronounced to be in itself *unessential*, and ought to have its substance merely in the utility of the teaching on which it is attendant. But this amounts to pronouncing that art does not bear its vocation and purpose in itself, but that its conception is rooted in something else, to which it is a *means*. Art is, in this case, only one among the several means which prove useful and are applied for the purpose of instruction. This brings us to the boundary at which art is made no longer to be an end on its own merits, seeing that it is degraded into a mere toy of entertainment or a mere means of instruction.

(γγ) This boundary becomes most sharply marked when a question is raised, in its turn, about a supreme end and aim for the sake of which the passions are to be purified and men are to be instructed. This aim has often, in modern times, been declared to be *moral* improvement, and the aim of art has been placed in the function of preparing the inclinations and impulses for moral perfection, and of leading them to this goal. This idea combines purification with instruction, inasmuch as art is, by communicating an insight into genuine moral goodness – that [LXX]

is, by instruction – at the same time to incite to purification, and, in this way alone to bring about the improvement of mankind as its useful purpose and supreme goal.

Regarding art in reference to moral improvement, the same has *prima facie* to be said as about the didactic purpose. We may readily grant that art must not as a principle take for its aim the immoral and its furtherance. But it is one thing to take immorality for the express aim of representation, and another to abstain from taking morality. Every genuine work of art may have a good moral drawn from it, but, of course, in doing so much depends on interpretation and on him who draws the moral. Thus one may hear the most immoral representations defended by saying that we must know evil, or sin, in order to act morally; and, conversely, it has been said that the portrayal of Mary Magdalene, the beautiful sinner who afterwards repented, has seduced many into sin, because art makes it look so beautiful to repent, and you must sin before you can repent. But the doctrine of moral improvement, if consistently carried out, goes in general yet further. It would not be satisfied with the possibility of extracting a moral from a work of art by interpretation, but it would, on the contrary, display the moral instruction as the substantive purpose of the work of art, and, indeed, would actually admit to portrayal none but moral subjects, moral characters, actions, and incidents. For art has the choice among its subjects, in contradistinction to history or the sciences which have their matter fixed for them.

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In order that we may be able to form a thoroughly adequate estimate of the idea that the aim of art is moral from this point of view, we must inquire first of all for the definite standpoint of the morality on which this doctrine is based. If we look closely at the standpoint of morality as we have to understand it in the best sense at the present day, we soon find that its conception does not immediately coincide with what apart from it we are in the habit of calling in a general way virtue, respectability, uprightness, etc. To be respectable and virtuous is not enough to make a man moral. Morality involves *reflection* and the definite consciousness of that which duty prescribes, and acting out of such a prior consciousness. Duty itself is the law of the will, which man nevertheless lays down freely out of his own self, and

then is supposed to determine himself to this duty for duty's and its fulfilment's sake, by doing good solely from the conviction which he has attained that it is the good. Now this law, the duty which is chosen for duty's sake to be the guide of action, out of free conviction and the inner conscience, and is then acted upon, is, taken by itself, the abstract universal of the will, and is the direct antithesis of nature, the sensuous impulses, the self-seeking interests, the passions, and of all that is comprehensively entitled the feelings and the heart. In this antagonism the one side is regarded as *negating* the other; and, seeing that both are present as antagonists within the subject (person), he has, as determining himself out of himself, the choice of following the one or the other. But, according to the view under discussion, a *moral* aspect is acquired by such a decision, and by the act performed in accordance with it, only through the free conviction of duty on the one hand, and, on the other hand, through the conquest, not only of the particular or separate will, of the natural motives, inclinations, passions, etc., but also through that of the nobler emotions and the higher impulses. For the modern moralistic view starts from the fixed antithesis of the will in its spiritual universality to its sensuous natural particularity, and consists not in the completed reconciliation of these contrasted sides, but in their conflict with one another, which involves the requirement that the impulses which conflict with duty ought to yield to it.

This antithesis does not merely display itself for our consciousness, in the limited region of moral action; but also emerges as a fundamental distinction and antagonism between that which is real essentially and in its own right, and that which is external reality and existence. Formulated in the abstract, it is the contrast of the universal and particular, when the former is explicitly fixed over against the latter, just as the latter is over against the former; more concretely, it appears in nature as the opposition of the abstract law against the abundance of individual phenomena, each having its own character; in the mind, as the sensuous and spiritual in man, as the battle of the spirit against the flesh, of duty for duty's sake, the cold command, with the individual interest, the warm feelings, the sensuous inclinations and impulses, the individual disposition as such; as the hard conflict of inward freedom and of natural necessity; [LXXII]

further, as the contradiction of the dead conception – empty in itself – compared with full concrete vitality, or of theory and subjective thought contrasted with objective existence and experience.

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These are antitheses which have not been invented, either by the subtlety of reflection or by the pedantry of philosophy, but which have from all time and in manifold forms preoccupied and disquieted the human consciousness, although it was modern culture that elaborated them most distinctly, and forced them up to the point of most unbending contradiction. Intellectual culture and the modern play of understanding create in man this contrast, which makes him an amphibious animal, inasmuch as it sets him to live in two contradictory worlds at once; so that even consciousness wanders back and forward in this contradiction, and, shuttlecocked from side to side, is unable to satisfy itself *as itself* on the one side as on the other. For, on the one side, we see man a prisoner in common reality and earthly temporality, oppressed by want and poverty, hard driven by nature, entangled in matter, in sensuous aims and their enjoyments; on the other side, he exalts himself to eternal ideas, to a realm of thought and freedom, imposes on himself as a *will* universal laws and attributions, strips the world of its living and flourishing reality and dissolves it into abstractions, inasmuch as the mind is put upon vindicating its rights and its dignity simply by denying the rights of nature and maltreating it, thereby retaliating the oppression and violence which itself has experienced from nature. Such a discrepancy in life and consciousness involves for modern culture and its understanding the demand that the contradiction should be resolved. Yet the understanding cannot release itself from the fixity of these antitheses. The solution, therefore, remains for consciousness a mere *ought*, and the present and reality only stir themselves in the unrest of a perpetual to and fro, which seeks a reconciliation without finding it. Then the question arises, whether such a many-sided and fundamental opposition which never gets beyond a mere ought and a postulated solution, can be the genuine and complete truth, and, in general, the supreme purpose. If the culture of the world has fallen into such a contradiction, it becomes the task of philosophy to undo or cancel it, i.e. to show that neither the one alternative in its

abstraction nor the other in similar one-sidedness possesses truth, but that they are essentially self-dissolving; that truth only lies in the conciliation and mediation of the two, and that this mediation is no mere postulate, but is in its nature and in reality accomplished and always self-accomplishing. This intuition agrees directly with the natural faith and will, which always has present to the mind's eye precisely this resolved antithesis, and in action makes it its purpose and achieves it. All that philosophy does is to furnish a reflective insight into the essence of the antithesis in as far as it shows that what constitutes truth is merely the resolution of this antithesis, and that not in the sense that the conflict and its aspects in any way *are not*, but in the sense that they *are, in reconciliation*.

(d) Now, as an ultimate aim implied a higher standpoint in the case of moral improvement, we shall have to vindicate this higher standpoint for art no less than for morals. Thereby we at once lay aside the false position, which has already been remarked upon, that art has to serve as a means for moral ends, and to conduce to the moral end of the world, as such, by instruction and moral improvement, and thereby has its substantive aim, not in itself, but in something else. If, therefore, we now continue to speak of an aim or purpose, we must, in the first instance, get rid of the perverse idea, which, in asking 'What is the aim?' retains the accessory meaning of the question, 'What is the *use*?' The perverseness of this lies in the point that the work of art would then be regarded as aspiring to something else which is set before consciousness as the essential and as what ought to be; so that then the work of art would only have value as a useful instrument in the realization of an end having substantive importance *outside* the sphere of art. Against this it is necessary to maintain that art has the vocation of revealing *the truth* in the form of sensuous artistic shape, of representing the reconciled antithesis just described, and, therefore, has its purpose in itself, in this representation and revelation. For other objects, such as instruction, purification, improvement, pecuniary gain, endeavour after fame and honour, have nothing to do with the work of art as such, and do not determine its conception.

It is from this point of view, into which *reflective* consideration of the matter resolves itself, that we have to apprehend the idea of art in its

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inner necessity, as indeed it was from this point of view, historically speaking, that the true appreciation and understanding of art took its origin. For that antithesis, of which we spoke, made itself felt, not only within general reflective culture, but no less in philosophy as such, and it was not till philosophy discovered how to overcome this antithesis absolutely that it grasped its own conception

and, just in as far as it did so, the conception of nature and of art.

Hence this point of view, as it is the reawakening of philosophy in general, so also is the reawakening of the science of art; and, indeed, it is this reawakening to which alone aesthetic as a science owes its true origin, and art its higher estimation.

The World as Will and Representation

Arthur Schopenhauer

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) was a German philosopher who identified the Kantian ‘thing in itself’ – the ultimate metaphysical side of the world as representation – with blind, purposeless ‘will.’ He held that the lives of sentient beings are full of suffering, but that aesthetic contemplation provides insight into the essential features of the world as well as a pleasureable break from willing.

Third Book
The World as Representation,
Second Consideration
Representation Independent of the
Principle of Sufficient Reason: the
Platonic Idea: the Object of Art

Τί τὸ ὄν μὲν αἰεὶ, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον; καὶ τί τὸ
 γιγνόμενον μὲν καὶ ἀπτολλύμενον, ὅντως δὲ
 οὐδέποτε ὄν;

Plato

[‘What is it that always is, and has no becoming; and what is it that becomes and passes away but never truly is?’ – Based on *Timaeus* 27d–28a]

Arthur Schopenhauer, from *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume I, translated by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway. London: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 191–192, 198–204, 207–215, 218–252, 259–263, 269–276, 279–295. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

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In the First Book, the world was presented as mere *representation*, object for a subject; in the Second Book we considered this world from its other side and found that it is also *will*, and this proved to be the only thing the world is, apart from representation. In recognition of this fact we went on to name the world as representation (both as a whole and in its parts) the *objecthood of the will*, which accordingly means: the will become object, i.e. representation. We may further recall that such an objectivation of the will had many, albeit determinate, levels at which the essence of the will enters representation (i.e. presents itself as an object) with gradually increasing degrees of clarity and perfection. We already recognized these levels as Plato’s Ideas, in so far as they are nothing but particular species, or the original, unchanging forms and qualities of all natural bodies, inorganic no less than organic, as well as the universal forces that manifest themselves according to natural laws. Taken together,

these Ideas present themselves in countless individuals and details, relating to these as model^a to imitations.^b The multiplicity of such individuals can be represented only through time and space, and their arising and passing away only through causality, and we know that all of these forms are nothing but the different configurations of the principle^c of sufficient reason, which is the ultimate principle^d of all finitude and individuation, as well as the universal form of representation as it comes under the cognition of the individual as such. By contrast, the Idea does not enter into that principle; hence, neither multiplicity nor change applies to it. While presenting itself in countless individuals that ceaselessly become and pass away, the Idea itself remains the same, unchanged; the principle of sufficient reason has no meaning for it. But since this is the form of the whole of the subject's cognition (to the extent that the subject has cognition as an *individual*), the Ideas also lie entirely outside the cognitive sphere of the subject as such. Thus, if the Ideas are supposed to be the object of cognition, then cognition will be possible only when individuality is suppressed in the cognitive subject. We will now turn to a closer and more thorough examination of this issue.

§ 31

But first, the following, very important remark. I hope that my argument in the previous Book was convincing: what Kant's philosophy calls the *thing in itself* (which appears as a doctrine that is so meaningful and yet obscure and paradoxical, particularly given the way Kant introduces it through an inference from grounded to ground) was seen as a stumbling block^e and in fact, as the weak point of his philosophy – as I was saying, if you approach this thing in itself along a completely different path, the path we have taken, it is nothing other than the *will*, given our determination of the expanded scope of this concept. I hope

further that after what has been said, there will be no reservations about recognizing what Plato calls the *eternal Ideas* or the unchanging forms (εἰδῆ) in the particular levels of the objectivation of the will that constitutes the in-itself of the world. [...]

§ 33

The only type of cognition that we as individuals possess is subordinate to the principle of sufficient reason, which excludes cognition of Ideas; as a result, it is certain that, if it is possible for us to raise ourselves from cognition of particular things to cognition of the Ideas, this can only take place by means of an alteration in the subject that corresponds to and is analogous with that radical change in the whole nature of the object, and by virtue of which the subject, in so far as it has cognition of an Idea, is no longer an individual.

We may remember from the previous Book that cognition in general belongs to the objectivation of the will on its higher levels, and that the sensibility, nerves and brain are, just like the other parts of organic beings, expressions of the will at this degree of its objecthood, and consequently that the representation which arises through them also serves the will as a means (μηχανή) for achieving its now complicated (πολυτελεστερά) ends of maintaining a creature^f with diverse needs. Originally and essentially therefore cognition is entirely in the service of the will, and just as the immediate object (which becomes the starting-point for cognition through application of the principle of causality) is nothing but objectified will, so all cognition that follows the principle of sufficient reason also maintains more or less of a relationship to the will. This is because the individual finds his body to be one object among the many to which it entertains a variety of relationships and connections^g in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason, and observation of these always leads back (whether the road is a long or a short one) to his body, and thus to his will.

^aVorbild.

^bNachbildern.

^cSatz.

^dPrincip.

^eStein des Anstoßes.

^fWesen.

^gIn this passage we translate *Beziehung* as 'relationship', *Verhältniß* as 'connection', and *Relation* as 'relation'. These distinctions are not always observed elsewhere in the translation.

Since it is the principle of sufficient reason that places the objects in this relationship to the body and thus to the will, the cognition that serves this principle will similarly only aim to come to know of objects just those connections posited by the principle of sufficient reason, and thus pursue their various relationships in time, space and causality. This is because it is only through these that the object is of *interest* to the individual, i.e. that it has a connection to will. That is why cognition in the service of the will does not have cognition of objects beyond their relations, and has cognition of objects only as far as they exist at this time, in this place, under these circumstances, through these causes, with these effects, and, in a word, as individual things: if we were to remove all these relations, then objects would disappear as well for such cognition, precisely because it has nothing other than this to cognize in them. – Nor can we conceal that the sciences also view things in essentially the same way, namely as nothing other than relations, connections of time, of space, the causes of natural alterations, the comparison of shapes, motives for events, and thus simply relations. What differentiates science from ordinary cognition is merely its form, systematic nature, the way it facilitates cognition by assembling all particulars under universals through subordination to concepts, thereby allowing cognition to attain completeness. All relations themselves possess only a relative existence: for instance, all being in time is a non-being as well, because time is just what enables the same thing to assume opposite qualities: thus every appearance in time is, in turn, *not*: because what distinguishes its beginning from its end is only time itself, something essentially vanishing, relative, and not enduring, here called permanence.^a But time is the most general form of all objects of cognition in the service of the will, and the fundamental type of the remaining forms of cognition.

For the most part, cognition always remains subordinated to the service of the will, as it in fact developed in this service, and indeed sprang from the will as the head springs from the trunk of the body. With animals this servitude of cognition to the will can never be overcome.^b With human

beings, such an overcoming appears only as an exception, as we will now be considering more closely. [. . .] This prerogative of humans is displayed by the Apollo Belvedere to the highest degree: the far-seeing^c head of the god of the Muses sits so freely on its shoulders that it seems entirely wrenched away from the body and no longer subject to its cares.

§ 34

As we have said, it is possible – although only in exceptional cases – to go from the ordinary cognition of particular things to cognition of the Idea. This transition occurs suddenly when cognition tears itself free from the service of the will so that the subject ceases to be merely individual and now becomes the pure, will-less subject of cognition, no longer concerned with relations following the principle of sufficient reason but instead resting and becoming absorbed in^d a steady contemplation of the object presented, aside from its interconnections^e with any other object.

This requires a detailed explanation if it is to become clear, and the reader must temporarily suspend his astonishment until it dies away of its own accord, which will happen once he has grasped the complete thought being communicated in this work.

When elevated by strength of mind to stop viewing things in the ordinary way, no longer led by the forms of the principle of sufficient reason to pursue merely the relations between things (which in the end always aims at their relation to our own will), if we stop considering the Where, When, Why and Wherefore of things but simply and exclusively consider the *What*, if we do not allow our consciousness to become engrossed by abstract thinking, concepts of reason; but if, instead of all this, we devote the entire power of our mind to intuition and immerse ourselves in this entirely, letting the whole of consciousness be filled with peaceful contemplation of the natural object^f that is directly present, a landscape, a tree,

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^cweitemherblickende.

^daufgeben in.

^eZusammenhänge.

^fGegenstand.

^aDauer.

^baufzuheben.

a cliff, a building, or whatever it might be, and, according to a suggestive figure of speech,^a we *lose* ourselves in this object completely, i.e. we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, the clear mirror of the object,^b so that it is as if the object^c existed on its own, without anyone to perceive it, and we can no longer separate the intuited from the intuition as the two have become one, and the whole of consciousness is completely filled and engrossed by a single intuitive image – if, therefore, the object^d is in this manner removed from any relation to things outside of itself, and the subject is removed from any relation to the will, then what we thus cognize is no longer the individual thing as such, but rather the *Idea*, the eternal form, the immediate objecthood of the will at this level: and this is precisely how someone gripped by this intuition is at the same time no longer an individual: the individual has lost himself in this very intuition: rather, he is the *pure*, will-less, painless, timeless *subject of cognition*. All this may seem quite peculiar at present (and I know very well that it confirms Thomas Paine's observation that 'from the sublime to the ridiculous there is only one step'^e) but it will become gradually clearer and less surprising in the sequel. It is also what Spinoza had in mind when he wrote: 'the mind is eternal to the extent that it conceives things under the form of eternity'^f (*Ethics*, V, Prop. 31, Scholium).^g In this kind of contemplation the particular thing instantly becomes the *Idea* of its species and the intuiting individual becomes the *pure subject of cognition*. The individual as such has cognition

only of particular^h things; the pure subject of cognition only of Ideas. This is because the individual is the subject of cognition in its relation to a certain particular appearance of the will it serves. This particular appearance of the will is, as such, subordinated to the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms: all cognition related to this individual thus follows the principle of sufficient reason as well, and since this kind of cognition only ever has relations as its object, no other kind is suitable for the will's purpose. As such, the cognizing individual and the particular thing he has cognition of are links in the chain of causes and effects, always located in some place and at some time. The pure subject of cognition and its correlate, the *Idea*, have left behind all those forms of the principle of sufficient reason: time, place, the cognizing individual and the individual he has cognition of have no meaning for it. Only when a cognizing individual raises himself to pure subject of cognition in the manner described, and in so doing raises the object observed to an *Idea*, does the *world as representation* step forward, purely and in its entirety, completely objectifying the will, since only the *Idea* is its *adequate objecthood*. [...] The will is the in-itself of the *Idea*, which completely objectifies it; it is also the in-itself of the particular thing, and of the individual cognizing it, which together objectify it incompletely. As will, outside of representation and all of its forms, it is one and the same thing in the object of contemplation and in the individual who soars upwards in this contemplation, becoming conscious of himself as pure subject: the two are thus not in themselves distinct, because in themselves they are the will, which cognizes itself here. Multiplicity and difference exist only as the manner in which they are cognized by the will, i.e. only in appearance, by virtue of its form, which is the principle of sufficient reason. Without the object, without the representation, I am not a cognizing subject but rather mere blind will; and similarly, without me as the subject of cognition, the thing cognized is not an object but rather mere will, blind urge.^h In itself, i.e. outside of representation, this will is one and the same thing as my own will: only in the world as representation,

^gFor clarification of the mode of cognition under discussion I also recommend what he says in the same work at Book II, Prop. 40, Schol., 2, and Book V, Prop. 25 to 38 about the *cognitio tertii generis, sive intuitiva* [third form of cognition, or intuitive cognition], and most especially Prop. XX, Schol.; Prop. 36, Schol., and Prop. 38, Proof and Scholium.

^anach einer sinnvollen Deutschen Redensart.

^bObjekt.

^cGegenstand.

^dObjekt.

^e*Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas*. [See *The Age of Reason*, Part II, Conclusion 'When authors and critics talk of the sublime, they see not how nearly it borders on the ridiculous'.]

^f*mens aeterna est, quatenus res sub aeternitatis specie concipit*.

^heinzelne.

^hDrang.

whose form is always minimally that of subject and object, are we separate from each other as the cognizing individual and the individual cognized. As soon as cognition, the world of representation, is suppressed, absolutely nothing is left but mere will, blind urge. The fact that it retains its objecthood and becomes representation presupposes at once both subject and object:^a but the fact that this objecthood is the pure, complete and adequate objecthood of the will presupposes the object as Idea, free from the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and the subject as pure subject of cognition, free from individuality and servitude to the will.

Now anyone who has become so engrossed and lost in the intuition of nature that he continues to exist only as the pure, cognitive subject will thus be immediately aware that as such he is the condition, which is to say the bearer, of the world of all objective being,^b because this now presents itself as dependent on him. He thus draws nature into himself, so that he feels it only as an accident of his being.^c It is in this sense that Byron said:

Are not the mountains, waves and skies, a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?^d

But how could anyone who feels this way consider himself absolutely transient in contrast to everlasting nature? He will rather be seized with the consciousness of what the *Upanishad* of the *Veda* expresses: 'I am all these creations taken together, and there is no other being besides me,'^e (*Oupnek'hat*, I, 122).

[. . .]

^asetzt, mit einem Schlage, sowohl Subjekt als Objekt.

^bDaseyn.

^cWesen.

^d*Childe Harold*, III, 75 (Schopenhauer quotes the lines in English and gives a translation in a footnote).

^e*Hae omni creaturae in totum ego sum, et praeter me aliud ens non est* (Deussen notes that the corresponding passage is *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad*, I, 4, 1, but that no wording there is exactly equivalent to the Latin version in the volume *Oupnek'hat*. The Persian editors of the text on which *Oupnek'hat* is based had the tendency to run together passages from different places in the *Upanishads*).

§ 36

History traces the thread of events: it is pragmatic to the extent that it derives them in accordance with the law of motivation, a law that determines the appearing will where it is illuminated by cognition. On the lowest levels of its objecthood, where the will still operates without cognition, natural science in the form of aetiology is concerned with the laws of the alterations of its appearances, and natural science in the form of morphology is concerned with what is permanent in its appearances; approaching its almost infinite task with the help of concepts that include the universal in order to deduce the particular from it. Finally, mathematics is concerned with the mere forms (i.e. time and space) in which the Ideas appear pulled apart into multiplicity, so they can be cognized by the subject as individual. All these, which are collectively known as science, follow the principle of sufficient reason in its different forms, and their theme remains appearance, its laws, connections and the relations that arise from these. – But now what mode of cognition is concerned with the truly essential aspect of the world alone, an aspect that exists outside and independently of all relations, the true content^f of the world's appearances, an essence that is not subjected to change and is thus cognized at all times with the same degree of truth, – in a word, the *Ideas*, which are the immediate and adequate objecthood of the thing in itself, the will? – It is *art*, the work of genius. Art repeats the eternal Ideas grasped through pure contemplation, it repeats what is essential and enduring in all the appearances of the world, and, depending on the medium in which it repeats the Ideas, it takes the form of either the visual arts,^g poetry^h or music; art originates in the cognition of the Ideas alone; and its only goal is the communication of this cognition. – Science, following the restless and insubstantial current of the four types of ground and consequent, is always ushered onward with each goal it attains, and can no more find a final goal or complete satisfaction than we can walk to the point where the clouds touch the horizon; art,

^fGehalt.

^gbildende Kunst.

^hPoesie.

on the other hand, is always at its goal because it wrests the object of its contemplation out from the current of worldly affairs,^a and the object stands before it in isolation: and this particular thing, which played such a vanishingly small role in that current of worldly affairs, becomes for art a representative of a whole, an equivalent of what is multiplied to infinity in space and time: thus art remains at rest with this particular: it stops the wheel of time: relations vanish for it: only what is essential, the Idea, is its object. – Thus we can directly describe it as *the way of regarding things independently from the principle of sufficient reason*, as opposed to the way of regarding things that closely follows this principle which is the path of experience and science. [...] The Ideas are grasped only through what we already described as a pure contemplation^b that is completely absorbed by its object, and the essence of *genius* consists simply in the prevalence of a capacity for such contemplation. Now since this calls for a complete forgetting of one's own person and its relationships, *genius*^c is nothing other than the most perfect *objectivity*,^d i.e. an objective orientation of the mind, as opposed to a subjective orientation that is directed to one's own person, i.e. the will. Accordingly, genius is the capacity to maintain oneself in a purely intuitive state, to lose oneself in intuition and to withdraw cognition that originally only existed in its service to the will from this service, i.e. temporarily to put one's interests, willing and purposes entirely out of mind, and consequently, fully to relinquish one's personality in order to remain as the *pure cognitive subject*, the dear eye of the world: and this not just momentarily, but for as long and with as much clarity of mind^e as is necessary to repeat what has been grasped in the form of well-considered art and 'what floats in wavering appearance to fasten down in enduring thoughts.'^f – For genius to emerge in an individual, it is as if a degree of cognitive power had been granted to him that is far in excess of the amount required

for the service of the individual will; and, when liberated, this surplus of cognition now turns into the subject purified of all will, the bright mirror of the essence of the world. – This explains why individuals of genius tend to be lively to the point of distraction:^g the present is rarely enough for them because it does not fully engage their consciousness: this is what gives them their restless zeal; they are constantly on the look-out for new objects that would be worth considering, and they long, almost always in vain, for the company of creatures similar to themselves, equals in whom they can really confide; in the meantime, ordinary mortals are completely engaged with and satisfied by the ordinary present, entering into it and finding people like themselves everywhere, deriving a sort of contentment from everyday life that is denied to genius. – Imagination^h has been recognized as an essential feature of genius, and the two are sometimes even considered identical: the first conclusion is correct but not the second. Since the objects of genius as such are the eternal Ideas, the permanent, essential forms of the world and all its appearances, and since cognition of the Idea is necessarily intuitive and not abstract, the genius's cognition would be restricted to the Ideas of objects actually present to him, and would depend on the chain of circumstances that leads him to these objects, if imagination did not broaden his horizon far beyond what he actually experiences personally, and enable him to take the few things that come into his actual apperception and construct everything else, thus allowing almost all the possible scenes of life to pass through him. Moreover, actual objects are almost always very deficient exemplars of the Idea presented in them: hence the genius needs imagination in order to see in things not what nature actually created,ⁱ but rather what it was trying unsuccessfully to create [...]. Thus, imagination broadens, as much in quality as in quantity, the genius's field of vision beyond the objects that are actually presented to him. This is why an uncommonly strong imagination is the companion – in fact the condition – of genius. But the converse is not true: the

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^a*Strohme des Weltlaufs.*

^b*Kontemplation.*

^c*Genialität.*

^d*Objektivität.*

^e*Besonnenheit.*

^fGoethe, *Faust* I, 348–9 slightly altered by Schopenhauer.

^g*Unruhe.*

^h*Phantasie.*

ⁱ*gebildet.*

former is not a sign of the latter since even people without any genius at all can have a great deal of imagination. An actual object can be regarded in two opposite ways: purely objectively, the way a genius does, grasping its Idea; or ordinarily, simply in its relations to other objects and to one's own will in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason; similarly, a figment of the imagination^a can be intuited in two ways as well: regarded in the first way, it becomes a means for cognizing the Idea (and the artwork is the communication of this Idea): in the second case, the figment is used to create day-dreams^b that gratify the individual's mood and conceit, momentarily deceiving and amusing him so that all he really comes to know are the relations between the figments of the imagination. Someone who plays this game is a day-dreamer:^c he will easily blend the images of his solitary self-amusement together with reality, for which he will then be unfit: he might write down the phantasmagoria^d of his imagination, where they become the ordinary novels of all genres, and entertain people like himself and the general public, since the reader pictures himself in the place of the hero and then finds the description very 'pleasant'.^e

The ordinary person, a factory product of nature that is made each day by the thousand, is, as we have said, not remotely capable of maintaining an attitude that is fully disinterested^f (in every sense of the term), even if he can assume such an attitude to begin with: yet this attitude is that of true contemplation.^g The ordinary person can only pay attention to things that stand in some sort of relation to his will, even if it is a very indirect one. The abstract concept of something is sufficient and even (for the most part) more suitable for this perspective, which only ever affords cognition of relations; so the ordinary person does not linger for very long with mere intuition, or gaze too long at an object; rather, whenever something presents itself to him, he

quickly looks for a concept to bring it under, just as a lazy person^h looks for a chair and then loses interest in it. That is why he finishes with everything so quickly, with artworks, with beautiful objects in nature, and with the truly and universally significant view of all the scenes of life. But he does not take the time; he looks only to his own course through life, or at most to anything that could be on his course, which is to say topographical signs in the broadest sense: he does not spend any time observing life itself as such. The genius, on the other hand, has such an excess of cognitive power that it can be temporarily withdrawn from service to his will; accordingly, he takes the time to observe life itself, and strives to grasp the Idea of each thing, not its relations to other things: as a result he often fails to think about his own course of life, and generally pursues it rather clumsily. For the ordinary person, the cognitive faculty is a lantern that lights the way, while for the genius it is the sun that reveals the world. [. . .]

Since cognition in a genius (i.e. cognition of the Idea) does not follow the principle of sufficient reason, and since cognition that does follow this principle confers cleverness and rationality in the affairs of life and gives rise to science, geniuses suffer from defects arising from neglect of that latter mode of cognition. Nonetheless we must add the qualification that what I say in this context is true only to the extent and during the time that they are really in the grips of the genius's mode of cognition, and this is by no means the case for every moment of their lives, since the great, though spontaneous exertion required for an apprehension of the Ideas that is free of the will necessarily wears off, and there are long intervals in which geniuses are rather similar to ordinary people in both their merits and their flaws. This is why people have always considered the activity of genius as inspiration (as in fact the name itself indicates), the activity of a superhuman being distinct from the individual himself and which takes possession of the individual only periodically. [. . .] Finally, intuitive cognition, the field that contains the Ideas entirely, is directly opposed to rational or abstract cognition, which is guided

^aein Phantasma.

^bLuftschlösser.

^cein Phantast.

^dGaukeleien.

^egemütlich.

^funinteressierte Betrachtung.

^gBeschaulichkeit.

^hTräge.

ⁱWirken.

by the principle of sufficient reason of cognition.^a It is a well-known fact that great genius is seldom paired with a preponderance of rationality; rather, the converse is generally the case and geniuses are often subject to violent affects and irrational passions. Still, the explanation^b for this is not the weakness of reason, but rather in part the extraordinary energy of the whole appearance of the will that the individual of genius is, and that expresses itself through the intensity of all his acts of the will, and in part the prevalence of intuitive cognition (through sense and understanding) over abstract cognition, and hence the decisive orientation towards the intuitive, whose highly energetic impression so eclipses the colourless concepts for the genius that the former rather than the latter becomes the guide for his actions, and these become correspondingly irrational: this is why the present always makes a very powerful impression on geniuses and goads them on towards thoughtlessness, affect and passion. And, since a portion of their cognition has been withdrawn from the service of the will, they will, in the course of a conversation, not think so much about the person they are speaking *to*, as the things they are speaking *about*, which they bear vividly in mind: thus they will judge or narrate too objectively for their own good and talk about things that it would be shrewder not to mention, etc. Finally, they are inclined to monologues and in general can exhibit many weaknesses that actually verge on madness. It has been frequently noted that genius^c and madness are two sides of the same coin and blend into each other, and poetic enthusiasm^d has even been called a type of madness:^e Horace calls it 'amiable madness'^f (*Odes*, III, 4), and Wieland 'sweet madness'^g at the beginning of *Oberon*. Even Aristotle, according to a passage in Seneca (*On Tranquility of the Mind*,^h 15, 16) said: 'There is no great genius without an admixture of madness.'ⁱ Plato expressed this in the myth of the dark cave cited above (*Republic*

VII) by saying that those who have been outside the cave and seen the true sunlight and actually existing things (the Ideas) can no longer see inside the cave because their eyes have become unaccustomed to the darkness; they can no longer properly recognize the shadow images down below, and will be ridiculed for their mistakes by the others who have never been out of the cave and away from these shadow images. In the *Phaedrus* he also says (p. 317) that there could be no true poets without a certain madness, and in fact (p. 327) that anyone who recognizes the eternal Idea in transient things will seem mad.^j [...] I must mention that in frequent visits to madhouses I have found individual subjects with unmistakably great talents, whose genius was clearly visible through their madness, although in these cases madness retained the upper hand entirely. This cannot be ascribed to chance, because on the one hand, there are relatively very few people who are mad, and on the other hand, genius is rare beyond all ordinary measures and appears only as the greatest exception in nature; we can convince ourselves of this merely by counting the really great geniuses produced in all of civilized Europe during the whole of antiquity and modernity (although only those who have left behind works that have retained an enduring value for humanity are to be included), – counting these individuals and comparing their number with the 250 million who, by renewing themselves every thirty years, constantly populate Europe. Indeed, I do not want to fail to mention that I have known people of decisive although certainly not outstanding intellectual^k superiority who at the same time betrayed a faint tinge of insanity.^l It might thus seem that every increase in intellect beyond the ordinary measure is an abnormality that disposes one to madness.

[...]

§ 37

As our discussion has shown, genius consists in the capacity for cognition independent of the principle of sufficient reason, and hence in the

^aSatz vom Grunde des Erkennens.

^bGrund.

^cGenialität.

^ddichterische Begeisterung.

^eWahnsinn.

^famabilis insania (*Odes* III, 4, 5–6).

^gholden Wahnsinn.

^hDe Tranquillitate Animi (correct reference is 17, 10).

ⁱNullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiae fruit.

^jPhaedrus 245a and 249d.

^kgeistig.

^lVerrücktheit.

capacity for cognition of the Ideas of things rather than cognition of individual things themselves that exist only in their relations; and genius consists in the capacity to be the correlate of the Idea over and against these individual things, which is to say, the capacity to be the pure subject of cognition and no longer an individual. Yet this capacity must reside in all people to a different and lesser degree; otherwise, they would be no more able to enjoy works of art than to produce them, and would be absolutely insensitive to beauty and sublimity – in fact these words would be meaningless for them. We must therefore assume that this faculty is present in everyone (unless perhaps there are some who are entirely incapable of aesthetic pleasure^a), and that everyone can have cognition of the Ideas of things in the particular things and in so doing momentarily put aside their own personality. The genius only has the advantage of being capable of sustaining this mode of cognition much longer and to a much higher degree, allowing him to maintain the clarity of mind^b needed to repeat what he has thus cognized in an intentional work,^c this repetition being the work of art itself. In the work of art he communicates the Idea he has grasped to others. It remains the same and unchanging throughout: and hence the nature^d of aesthetic pleasure is the same whether it is called forth by a work of art or directly through the intuition of nature and life. The artwork merely facilitates the kind of cognition in which the pleasure consists. That we encounter the Idea more readily in the artwork than we do directly in nature and reality is due solely to the fact that the artist has cognition of only the Idea and not reality and so has replicated only the pure Idea in his work, separating it off from reality and omitting all distracting contingencies. The artist allows us to look into the world through his eyes. The fact that he has these eyes, that he has cognition of the essential aspect of things lying outside of all relations, is precisely the gift of genius, and it is innate; but the fact that he also can lend this gift to us and allow us to use his eyes: this is acquired, it is the technical aspect of art. This is why, now that I have presented the inner essence of the aesthetic mode of

cognition in its most general outline, the more thorough philosophical consideration of the beautiful and the sublime that follows will discuss them both in nature and in art simultaneously, without separating these any further. I will next consider what takes place when people are moved^e by the beautiful, when we are moved by the sublime: the question of whether this emotion^f proceeds directly from nature, from life, or whether it can be passed on to them only through the medium of art makes no real difference, only a superficial one.

§ 38

We have discovered that there are *two inseparable components* of the aesthetic way of looking at things: cognition of the object, not as a particular thing but rather as a Platonic *Idea*, i.e. as a permanent form of this whole genus of things; and then the self-consciousness of the one who has this cognition, not as an individual, but as *pure, will-less subject of cognition*. The condition under which both components always emerge together was the abandonment of the mode of cognition bound up with the principle of sufficient reason, which is the only mode suitable for the service of the will, as well as for science. – We will see that even the *pleasure* that is excited by the sight of the beautiful arises from both of those components, and in fact sometimes more from the one, and sometimes more from the other, according to the object of aesthetic contemplation.

All *willing* springs from need, and thus from lack, and thus from suffering. Fulfilment brings this to an end; but for every wish^g that is fulfilled, at least ten are left denied: moreover, desire^h lasts a long time and demands go on forever; fulfilment is brief and sparsely meted out. But even final satisfaction itself is only illusory: the fulfilled wish quickly gives way to a new one: the former is known to be a mistake, the latter is not yet known to be one. No achieved object of willing gives lasting, unwavering satisfaction; rather, it is only ever like the alms thrown to a beggar

^aWohlgefallen.

^bBesonnenheit.

^cin einem willkürlichen Werk.

^dWesen.

^erührt.

^fRührung.

^gWunsch.

^hBegehren.

that spares his life today so that his agony can be prolonged until tomorrow. – Thus, as long as our consciousness is filled by our will, as long as we are given over to the pressure^a of desires with their constant hopes and fears, as long as we are the subject of willing, we will never have lasting happiness or peace. Whether we hunt or we flee, whether we fear harm or chase pleasure, it is fundamentally all the same: concern for the constant demands of the will, whatever form they take, continuously fills consciousness and keeps it in motion: but without peace, there can be no true well-being.^b So the subject of willing remains on the revolving wheel of Ixion, keeps drawing water from the sieve of the Danaids, is the eternally yearning Tantalus.

But when some occasion from the outside or a disposition^c from within suddenly lifts us out of the endless stream of willing, tearing cognition from its slavery to the will, our attention is no longer directed to the motives of willing but instead grasps things freed from their relation to the will, and hence considers them without interests, without subjectivity, purely objectively; we are given over to the things entirely, to the extent that they are mere representations, not to the extent that they are motives: then suddenly the peace that we always sought on the first path of willing but that always eluded us comes of its own accord, and all is well with us. It is the painless state that Epicurus prized as the highest good and the state of the gods: for that moment we are freed from the terrible pressure of the will, we celebrate the Sabbath of the penal servitude of willing, the wheel of Ixion stands still.

232 But this is precisely the state that I described above as being essential for cognition of the Idea, as a state of pure contemplation, absorption in intuition, losing oneself in the object, forgetting all individuality, abolishing the mode of cognition that follows the principle of sufficient reason and grasps only relations; in so doing, the particular intuited thing is at once and inseparably raised to the Idea of its type, and the cognizing individual is raised to the pure subject of will-less cognition; as such, neither stands in the stream of

time or of any other relations. It is then all the same whether we see the setting of the sun from a prison or from a palace.

Inner disposition, a preponderance of cognition over willing, can produce this state in any surroundings. We see this in those excellent Dutch masters^d who directed this sort of purely objective intuition towards the most insignificant objects and have erected a lasting monument to their own objectivity^e and mental tranquillity in the *still life*. The aesthetic spectator cannot consider this without emotion, since it puts before him/ the artist's peaceful, quiet, will-less state of mind, the state of mind that was needed to intuit such insignificant things in such an objective way, to consider them so attentively and to repeat this intuition with such clarity of vision;^f and since the picture invites the spectator to share in this state, his emotion is often even augmented by the contrast to the uneasy mental state,^h clouded by intense willing, in which he finds himself. Landscape painters, particularly Ruisdael, have often painted utterly insignificant landscapes in the same spirit and so produced the same effect in an even more gratifying manner.

An artist's inner mental strength can achieve this much entirely on its own: but the purely objective frame of mindⁱ can be facilitated and promoted from the outside by the right sort of objects, by the richness of beautiful nature that invites intuition of them, and indeed does so insistently. Whenever nature suddenly rises to meet our gaze, it almost always succeeds, if only for a few moments, in snatching us away from subjectivity, from our slavery to the will, and transporting us into the state of pure cognition. This also explains why people who are tormented by passions or needs and worries are so suddenly refreshed, cheered and comforted by a single free glimpse into nature: the storm of passions, the stress^j of wishes and fears as well as all the torment of willing are then immediately and miraculously

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^aDrange.

^bWohlseyn.

^cStimmung.

^dNiederländer.

^eObjektivität.

^fvergegenwärtigt.

^gbesonnen.

^hGemütsverfassung.

ⁱGemütsstimmung.

^jDrang.

calmed. For at the moment when, torn free from willing, we surrender ourselves to pure, will-less cognition, we enter into another world, as it were, where everything that moves our will and agitates us so powerfully no longer exists. That liberation of cognition lifts us out of all this as profoundly and as completely as sleep and dreaming do: happiness and unhappiness disappear: we are no longer the individual, this is forgotten, we are only the pure subject of cognition: we continue to exist only as the *one* eye of the world that gazes out from all cognizing creatures, although it can only become completely freed from service to the will in human beings when all individual differences have vanished, and indeed so completely that it is then a matter of indifference whether this seeing eye belongs to a powerful king or a suffering beggar. This is because neither happiness nor misery is taken with us across this border. We are always so close to a realm where we have escaped all our misery completely; but who has enough strength to survive there for long? As soon as any relation between even that purely intuitive object and our own will, our own person, re-enters our consciousness, the magic is over: we fall back into cognition governed by the principle of sufficient reason, we no longer recognize the Idea but only the particular thing, the link in a chain to which we too belong, and we are once again given over to all our misery. – The majority of people almost always occupy this standpoint because they have absolutely no objectivity, i.e. genius. This is why they do not like to be alone in nature: they need company, or at least a book. Their cognition is still in the service of the will, so what they look for in an object is some sort of connection with their will, and if something lacks any such connection there sounds within them, like a ground bass,^a a constant, hopeless ‘it’s no use to me’: which means that even the most beautiful surroundings will have a desolate, gloomy, alien, hostile appearance for them when they are alone.

234 Finally, it is also the blessing of a will-less intuition^b that, through an act of self-deception, it casts such a wonderful spell over things in the past or far away, presenting them to us in a so much rosier light. This is because when we

picture days long past spent in a distant place, our imagination recalls only the objects, not the subject of the will, a subject that carried its incurable sufferings around with it then as well as now: but these have been forgotten because they have since made way for so many others. Now objective intuition^c operates in memory just as intuition of the present *would* operate if we were able to free ourselves from the will and surrender ourselves to intuition. That is why sudden memories of past and distant scenes fly past us like a lost paradise, especially when some difficulty troubles us more than usual. Imagination^d recalls only what is objective, not what is individual-subjective, and we imagine^e that the objective scene once stood before us as pure and unclouded by any relation to the will as we picture it now in the imagination: but in fact, the relation of objects to our willing was as painful to us then as it is now. We can avoid all the suffering that comes from objects in the present just as well as we can avoid it from those that are remote as soon as we raise ourselves to viewing them in a purely objective way, thus creating the illusion that these objects alone are present and we are not: then, as pure subject of cognition, we are rid of our suffering selves and fully one with the objects, and in such moments our needs are as alien to us as they are to the objects. The world as representation is then all that remains, and the world as will has vanished.

I hope that all these remarks have enabled me to make clear the nature^f of the subjective condition for aesthetic pleasure, and how great a role this subjective condition plays in the pleasure itself, namely the liberation of cognition from service to the will, forgetting oneself as an individual, and the elevation of consciousness to the pure, will-less, timeless subject of cognition, independent of all relations. The objective side of aesthetic spectatorship, the intuitive apprehension of the Platonic Idea always occurs simultaneously with and as a necessary correlate to this subjective side. But before we turn to a closer examination of this objective side and its contribution to art, it is more to the purpose to remain

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^aGrundbaß.

^bAnschauen.

^cAnschauung.

^dPhantasie.

^ewir bilden uns ein.

^fArt.

with the subjective side of aesthetic pleasure somewhat longer, in order to conclude our examination of it by discussing the impression of the *sublime*, which depends on it alone and arises through a modification of it. After this, an examination of the objective side will complete our investigation of aesthetic pleasure.

[. . .]

§ 39

All of these considerations are meant to emphasize the subjective component of aesthetic pleasure, which is to say this pleasure to the extent that it is a delight in simple, intuitive cognition as such, as opposed to the will, – these considerations naturally include, and are directly related to the following explanation of the disposition called the feeling of the *sublime*.^a

We have already noted above that our transport^b into the state of pure contemplative intuition^c occurs most easily when objects meet that state halfway,^d i.e., when they turn readily into representatives of their Ideas by virtue of their intricate and at the same time clear and determinate form, which constitutes beauty in the objective sense. We find this quality above all in natural beauty, which gives even the most insensitive people at least a fleeting sense of aesthetic pleasure: in fact, it is striking how the plant kingdom in particular invites us to assume an aesthetic perspective, insists upon it, as it were; we could say that this obliging character^e of plants is connected with the fact that unlike animal bodies, these organic beings are not themselves the immediate object of cognition and thus require an outside^f individual who is endowed with understanding if they are to quit the world of blind willing for that of representation, which is why they long for this exit, so that they can attain at least indirectly what is denied to them directly. In any event, I will leave this bold and somewhat

rambling conjecture entirely undecided, since only a very ardent and devoted consideration of nature can inspire or justify it.* Nature has this obliging character, a significance and clarity in its forms that enables the Ideas individuated in them to address us readily, – and as long as it is this obliging character that transports us from cognition of mere relations in the service of the will into aesthetic contemplation, and in so doing elevates us to the subject of cognition that is free of the will: as long as this is the case, it is only the *beautiful* that affects us, and the feeling of beauty that is aroused. But if the very objects whose significant forms invite us to pure contemplation have a hostile relation to the human will in general (as it presents itself in its objecthood, the human body) and oppose it, threatening it with a superior power that suppresses all resistance, or reducing it to nothing with its immense size; and if the spectator pays no attention to this obtrusive, hostile relation to his will, but rather, although perceiving and acknowledging it, consciously turns away from it by violently wrenching himself free from his will and its relations and surrendering himself to cognition alone, peacefully contemplating those very objects that are terrible to the will as pure, will-less subject of cognition, grasping only their Ideas (Ideas being foreign to every relation) and thus gladly lingering over their contemplation,^g and consequently being raised above^h himself, his own person, his willing, and all willing: – then he is filled with the feeling of the *sublime*,ⁱ he is in a state of elevation,^j which is why the object that gives rise to this state is also called *sublime*. Hence what distinguishes the feeling of the sublime from the feeling of the

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*I am all the more delighted and astonished now, 40 years after I so timidly and hesitantly recorded the idea above, to have discovered that St Augustine has already expressed it: *Arbusta formas suas varias, quibus mundi hujus visibilis structura formosa est, sentiendas sensibus praebent; ut pro eo quod nosse non possunt, quasi innotescere velle videantur* [Plants offer the senses for perception their manifold forms through which the visible structure of this world is beautifully shaped, since, being themselves incapable of cognition, they seem to want to be known] (*De civ. Dei* [City of God], XI, 27).

^aBetrachtung

^bhinausgehoben.

ⁱErhaben.

^jErhebung.

^aErhaben.

^bVersetzen.

^cAnschaun.

^dGegenstände demselben entgegenkommen.

^edieses Entgegenkommen.

^ffremd.

beautiful is this: with the beautiful, pure cognition has won the upper hand without a struggle, since the beauty of the object (i.e. that quality in the object that facilitates cognition of its Idea), has expelled from consciousness both the will and the cognition of relations that toils in its service, and has done so without resistance and thus imperceptibly, leaving consciousness as the pure subject of cognition, so that not even a memory of the will remains. With the sublime, on the other hand, that state of pure cognition is gained only by means of a conscious and violent tearing free from relationships between the same object and the will (relationships that are recognized as unfavourable) by means of a free and conscious elevation over the will and the cognition relating to it. This elevation must not only be achieved consciously, it must also be sustained and is therefore accompanied by a constant recollection of the will, although not of a particular, individual willing, such as fear or desire,^a but rather of human willing in general, to the extent that it is universally expressed through its objecthood, the human body. If a real, particular act of will were to enter consciousness through some actual personal distress or danger from the object, then the individual will that was actually moved in this way would quickly gain the upper hand, the tranquillity of contemplation would be rendered impossible, and the impression of the sublime would be lost, since it would give way to anxiety, in which the individual's attempts to save himself would supersede any other thought. – Some examples will clarify this theory of the aesthetic sublime considerably and place it beyond doubt; at the same time they will demonstrate the differences between the various grades of the feeling of the sublime. The feeling of the sublime is the same as the feeling of the beautiful in its most important respect, namely pure cognition free from the will and the cognition that necessarily appears along with this, of the Ideas that stand outside of all relations determined by the principle of sufficient reason. The feeling of the sublime is distinct from the feeling of the beautiful only by virtue of an additional element, namely an elevation above the relationship^b – recognized as

hostile – between the object contemplated and the will in general. Several different degrees of sublimity are thus apparent depending on whether this additional element is strong, loud, urgent, close, or only weak, distant, merely intimated – in fact, this is the origin of the transition from the beautiful to the sublime. I think it is relevant to this account to illustrate this transition as well as the weaker grades of the impression of the sublime by means of examples, although people without much aesthetic sensitivity and whose imaginations are not very lively will only understand the later examples of the higher, clearer degrees of the impression of the sublime; accordingly, they should focus on these later examples and disregard the ones that will be discussed first of the very weak degrees of the impression under examination.

Just as a human being is dark and vehement impulse^c of willing (signified by the pole of the genitals as the focal point of willing) and at the same time eternal, free, *serene*^d subject of pure cognition (signified by the pole of the brain), similarly and corresponding to this contrast, the sun is a source of both *light*, the condition for the most perfect type of cognition, and for precisely this reason the most joyful^e of things, – and *heat*, the primary condition for all life, i.e. of all appearance of the will on its higher levels. Thus, what heat is for the will, light is for cognition. Light is for this very reason the greatest diamond in the crown of beauty, and has the most decisive effect on the cognition of every beautiful object: its general presence is an indispensable condition; when placed to advantage, it enhances the beauty of even the most beautiful. It enhances architectural beauty above all else, although it can turn even the most insignificant thing into a beautiful object. – Now if in the dead of winter, when all of nature is frozen, we look at the rays of the sun, low in the sky and reflected by stony masses they illuminate without warmth, and which thus only favour the purest mode of cognition, not the will, then contemplation^f of the beautiful effect of light on these masses transports us, as all beauty does, into the state of pure cognition, a state however

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^aWunsch.^bVerhältnis.^cDrang.^dheiter.^eerfreulichste.^fBetrachtung.

that here calls for a certain elevation above the interest of the will through our faint recollection of how little warmth (the principle of life) is provided by these very rays, – and contains a gentle invitation to persist in pure cognition, turned away from all willing, and is in precisely this way a transition from the feeling of beautiful to that of the sublime. It is the faintest intimation of the sublime in the beautiful, and beauty itself only emerges here at a low degree. The following example is almost as faint.

Let us transport ourselves to a very solitary region with a boundless horizon under a completely cloudless sky, with trees and plants in completely still air, no animals, no people, no moving water, the deepest calm; – surroundings like these are like a summons to seriousness, to contemplation, to tear oneself free from all willing with its pressing needs: but this is precisely what gives such a lonely and deeply tranquil environment a tinge of the sublime. The will needs to keep striving and attaining, and since this environment does not offer it any objects either favourable or unfavourable, then only the state of pure contemplation remains, and anyone incapable of this is abandoned with shameful degradation to the emptiness of the idle will, the misery of boredom.

Accordingly, such surroundings provide a standard for measuring our own intellectual value, which can be gauged by our ability to tolerate or even love solitude. Thus, the environment described above offers an example of the sublime at a low degree, since the state of pure cognition, in its peacefulness and total sufficiency, is blended with a contrasting memory of the dependence and poverty of a will in need of constant activity.^a – The view out over endless prairies in the North American interior is renowned for this species of the sublime.

Now if we allow this sort of environment to be devoid of plant life and to exhibit only barren rocks, then the will becomes quickly alarmed by the complete absence of organic material necessary for our subsistence. The desert assumes a terrible aspect:^b our mood becomes more tragic: the elevation to pure cognition takes place with a decided tearing away from the interests of the

will, and as long as we persist in the state of pure cognition, the feeling of the sublime comes clearly to the fore.

The feeling of the sublime can be occasioned at still higher gradations by the following environment. Nature in stormy motion; the gloaming^c through threatening black storm clouds; enormous, barren, hanging rocks that interlock so as to cut off our view; rushing, foaming masses of water; complete desolation; the howling of the wind as it cuts through a ravine. Our dependency, our struggle with hostile nature, our will which is broken in this struggle, these now come vividly^d before our eyes: but as long as our personal troubles do not gain the upper hand and we remain in a state of aesthetic contemplation,^e the pure subject of cognition peers through that struggle of nature, through that image of the broken will, and calmly, in a manner both unperturbed and unconcerned^f grasps the Ideas in those very objects that are threatening and terrible to the will. The feeling of the sublime lies in precisely this contrast.

But the impression becomes even more powerful when we find ourselves face to face with the struggle of enraged forces of nature in all their grandeur, when in those surroundings, the rage of a plunging stream prevents us from hearing our own voices; – or if we are on the high seas, in a raging storm, with waves as tall as houses rising up and sinking back down again, violently breaking against steep cliffs on the shore, spraying foam high into the air, the storm howling, the ocean roaring, lightning flashing from black clouds, and thunderclaps drowning out the storm and the sea. Then the untroubled spectator will experience the twofold character of his consciousness most clearly: he feels himself to be both an individual, a frail appearance of the will that can be crushed by the slightest blow of those forces, helpless against the might of nature, dependent, abandoned to chance, a vanishing nothing in the face of enormous powers; and yet at the same time the eternal, tranquil subject of cognition that, as the condition of all objects,

^c*Helldunkel*.

^d*anschaulich*.

^e*Beschauung*.

^fSchopenhauer inserts the English term in parentheses, after the German term '*nicht mitgetroffen*'.

^a*Treiben*.

^b*Charakter*.

carries and supports just this entire world, with the terrible struggles of nature merely as its representation, while the subject itself calmly apprehends the Ideas, free from and foreign to all need and all willing. This is the full impression of the sublime. Here it is occasioned by the sight of a power that is incomparably superior to the individual and that threatens him with annihilation.

This impression can arise in a completely different manner, from the presence of a mere magnitude in space and time, a magnitude immense enough to reduce the individual to nothingness. We can call the first type the dynamic sublime and the second the mathematical sublime, retaining Kant's terms and his correct classification,^a although we part ways with him completely when it comes to the explanation of the inner essence of this impression, and allow neither moral reflections nor hypotheses from scholastic philosophy to play a role.

When we lose ourselves in the contemplation^b of the infinite extent of the world in space and time, reflecting on the millennia past and the millennia to come, – or indeed when the night sky actually brings countless worlds before our eyes, so that we become forcibly aware of the immensity of the world, – then we feel ourselves reduced to nothing, feel ourselves as individuals, as living bodies, as transient appearances of the will, like drops in the ocean, fading away, melting away into nothing. But at the same time, rising up^c against such a spectre of our own nothingness, against such a slanderous impossibility, is our immediate consciousness that all these worlds really exist only in our representation, only as modifications of the eternal subject of pure cognition, which is what we find ourselves to be as soon as we forget our individuality, and which is the necessary, the conditioning bearer and support of all worlds and all times. The magnitude of the world, which we used to find unsettling, is now settled securely within ourselves: our dependence on it is nullified by its dependence on us. – Yet we do not reflect on all this straight away; instead it appears only as the felt consciousness that we are, in some sense (that

only philosophy makes clear), one with the world, and thus not brought down, but rather elevated,^d by its immensity. It is the felt consciousness of what the *Upanishads* of the *Vedas* repeatedly express in so many ways, but most exquisitely in that dictum already cited above: 'I am all these creations taken together, and there is no other being besides me'^e (*Oupnek'hat*, Vol. I, p. 122). This is an elevation above one's own individuality,^f the feeling of the sublime.

We can get a direct impression of the mathematical sublime from a space that is certainly small in comparison with the whole world, but that becomes immediately and completely perceptible so that its entire magnitude has an effect on us in all three dimensions sufficient to make the size of our own body almost infinitely small. A space that is empty for perception (such as an open space) can never have this effect, only a space that can be immediately perceived because it is bounded in all dimensions, and thus only a huge and very high dome, such as St Peter's in Rome or St Paul's in London. In these cases the feeling of the sublime arises through an awareness of the vanishing nothingness of our own bodies in the face of a magnitude that is on the other hand found only in our representation and that, as the subject of cognition, we support, and so in this as in all other cases, the feeling arises through the contrast between the insignificance and dependency of our self as an individual, as an appearance of the will, over and against the consciousness of ourselves as the pure subject of cognition. Even the dome of the starry heavens, when regarded in the absence of reflection, operates no differently from those domes made of stone, and thus only with its apparent magnitude, not its real one. – Many objects of our intuition arouse the impression of the sublime by reducing us to nothingness in the face of their spatial magnitude or their advanced age, i.e. their temporal duration, and yet we revel in the pleasure of seeing them: very high mountains, the pyramids of Egypt, colossal ruins of early antiquity are all of this type. [. . .]

^aKant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* §§ 24ff, Ak. 5: 247ff.

^b*Betrachtung*.

^c*erhebt sich*.

^d*gehoben*.

^e*Hae omnes creaturae in totum ego sum, et praeter me aliud ens non est*.

^f*das eigene Individuum*.

§ 40

245 Because opposites shed light on each other, we should perhaps remark here that the true opposite of the sublime will certainly not be recognized as such at first glance: it is the *stimulating*. I understand by this something that arouses the will with the prospect of immediate satisfaction,^a fulfilment. If the feeling of the sublime comes about when something^b directly unfavourable to the will becomes an object^c of pure contemplation, and this contemplation is sustained only by constantly turning away from the will and rising^d above its interests, this constituting the sublimity of disposition; then the stimulating^e by contrast drags the viewer down from the pure contemplation required for any apprehension of the beautiful, since it necessarily stimulates^f his will with the same immediately agreeable objects, so that the viewer no longer remains the pure subject of cognition, but instead turns into the needy, dependent subject of willing. – Every cheerful type of beauty is generally called stimulating, but this concept is too broad and in need of further distinctions, so I must put it entirely to the side and in fact reject it. – But in the sense we have specified and clarified, I can find only two species of the stimulating in the field of art, and both are unworthy of art. The first is very low, and can be found in Dutch still lifes when they make the mistake of portraying objects that are edible and whose illusory presentation necessarily stirs the appetite, which is just the sort of stimulation of the will that puts an end to any aesthetic contemplation of an object. Paintings of fruit are still admissible, since fruit is a further development of the flower and presents itself through form and colour as a beautiful product of nature without necessarily reminding us of its edibility; but unfortunately we often find deceptively natural portrayals of prepared and table-ready dishes, oysters, herring, lobster, bread and butter, beer, wine, etc., and this is totally objectionable. – In historical painting and sculpture the stimulating consists in nudes whose posture, dishabille, and whole manner of

treatment are calculated to arouse lust in the viewer; this instantly annuls any purely aesthetic contemplation, and thus works counter to the goal of art. This mistake corresponds precisely to the mistake we just criticized in the Dutch. The ancients almost never commit this error, for all the beauty and complete nudity of their figures, because the artist himself created them with a purely objective spirit, filled with ideal beauty, not in a subjective spirit of base desire.^g – The stimulating is therefore to be universally avoided in art. 246

There is a negative stimulation too, which is even more objectionable than the positive stimulation just mentioned, and this is the disgusting. Just as with genuine stimulation, it stimulates the viewer's will, destroying any purely aesthetic contemplation. But what it arouses is an intense negative willing,^h a repugnance: it stimulates the will by showing it objects it detests. This is why people have always known that it is not at all permissible in art, while even ugliness can be tolerated in the right place as long as it is not disgusting, as we shall see further below.

§ 41

The course of our investigations required us to insert a discussion of the sublime into the middle of our discussion of the beautiful, having investigated only its subjective side.

This is because it was only a special modification of this subjective side that distinguished the sublime from the beautiful. Whether the state of pure, will-less cognition that is presupposed and required by all aesthetic contemplation came about as if on its own and without resistance, invited and drawn forward by the object, with the will simply disappearing from consciousness; or whether this state was first achieved only through a free and conscious elevation above the will – and the contemplated object has an unfavourable and hostile relation to this will, which would annul contemplation if we gave ourselves over to it; – this is the difference between the beautiful and the sublime. There is no essential distinction between them in the object, because in every instance, the object of aesthetic contemplation is

^aGewährung.

^bGegenstand.

^cObjekt.

^dErhebung.

^eReizende.

^faufreizt.

^gBegierde.

^hNichtwollen.

not the particular thing but rather the Idea striving to be revealed in it, i.e. the adequate objecthood of the will at a particular level; its necessary correlate is the pure subject of cognition that, like the Idea, has withdrawn from the principle of sufficient reason, just as the correlate of the individual thing is the cognizing individual, both of which lie within the sphere of the principle of sufficient reason.

[...]

Since on the one hand, every existing thing^a can be considered purely objectively and apart from all relation, and since on the other hand, the will appears in every thing on some level of its objecthood, making the thing an expression of an Idea; so it follows that everything is *beautiful*. – Dutch still lifes, which we have already mentioned above (§ 38) in this connection, testify to the fact that even the most insignificant thing can be viewed in a purely objective and will-less manner, and hence prove to be beautiful. But one thing is more beautiful than another when it facilitates that purely objective contemplation,^b meeting it halfway and indeed compelling it to take place, in which case we call the thing very beautiful. This happens in part because, as an individual thing, it expresses the Idea of its species^c very purely, through the very clear, pure and determinate relation between its parts (a relation that is saturated with significance); it reveals its Idea perfectly because it completely unites all the possible expressions of its species and thus greatly facilitates the viewer's transition from the individual thing to the Idea and thereby to a state of pure contemplation.^d This advantage of a particularly beautiful object also lies in part in the fact that the Idea itself which addresses us from the object is at a high level of the objecthood of the will and is thus saturated in significance and highly suggestive. This is why human beings are more beautiful than anything else, and the revelation of the human essence is the highest goal of art. The human figure and expression are the most significant objects for the visual arts,^e just as human action is the most significant object for poetry. – Still, each and every thing has its own distinctive beauty: not only every organic thing

that presents itself in the unity of an individuality; but even inorganic things that lack form, and in fact all artefacts as well. This is because all these things reveal the Ideas in which the will objectifies itself on the lowest levels, and at the same time contribute the deepest, lingering bass-tones of nature, as it were. Gravity, rigidity, fluidity, light, etc. are the Ideas that express themselves in rocks, buildings, bodies of water. Fine landscape gardening^f and architecture can do nothing more than help these things display their qualities clearly, completely, and in many different ways, giving them the opportunity to express themselves purely, by means of which they invite us to contemplate them aesthetically^g and facilitate such contemplation. On the other hand, inferior buildings and areas neglected by nature or ruined by art have very little or no chance for success in this: all the same, the universal, fundamental Ideas of nature cannot disappear from them entirely. Even in these cases, they address the viewer who looks for them, and even inferior buildings and the like are capable of being viewed aesthetically: the Ideas of the most universal qualities of their materials^h are still recognizable in them, it is only that the artificialⁱ form they have been given does not facilitate aesthetic contemplation, but in fact makes it more difficult. Consequently, even artefacts serve to express Ideas: only it is not the Idea of the artefact that speaks from them, but rather the Idea of the material^j that has been given this artificial form. Scholastic terminology offers two phrases that handily express this thought, namely that the Idea expressed is that of the artefact's *forma substantialis*^k and not its *forma accidentalis*,^l and the latter does not lead to any Idea but only to a human concept, which is where it originated. It goes without saying that in this context we expressly do not mean by artefact a work of plastic art.^m Moreover, what the scholastics actually understood by *forma substantialis* is what I refer to as

^ajedes vorhandene Ding.

^bBetrachtung.

^cGattung.

^dBeschaulichkeit.

^ebildenden Kunst.

^fschöne Gartenkunst.

^gzur ästhetischen Beschauung.

^hStoff.

ⁱkünstlich.

^jMaterial.

^kSubstantial form.

^lAccidental form.

^mWerk der bildenden Kunst.

the degree of objectivation of the will in a thing. We will come back to the expression of the Idea of material shortly, when we consider architectural beauty. – Given our view, we cannot agree with Plato when he claims (*Republic* X, pp. 284–5, and *Parmenides*, p. 79, Bipont edition^d) that tables and chairs express the Ideas of Table and Chair; rather, we say that they express the Ideas that already announce themselves^b as such in their bare material. According to Aristotle (*Metaphysics* XI, chapter 3) Plato himself only allowed for Ideas of natural beings: ‘Plato says that there are as many Ideas as there are natural things,’^c and in chapter 5 it says that according to the Platonists, there are no Ideas of House or Ring. In any case, even Plato’s closest students denied that there were Ideas of artefacts, as Alcinoüs reports (*The Handbook of Platonism*,^d chapter 9). He says specifically: ‘But they define the *Idea* as a timeless archetype of natural things. For most of Plato’s followers do not admit there to be Ideas of artificial products, e.g. of shields and lyres, nor of things that are contrary to nature, such as fever or cholera, nor of particular beings such as Socrates or Plato, nor of petty things such as dirt or fragments, nor of relations, such as being greater or taller; for the Ideas are the eternal thoughts of God and are perfect in themselves.’^e – This gives

me the opportunity to mention another point in which our doctrine of the Ideas deviates quite radically from Plato’s. He teaches (*Republic* X, p. 288^f) that the object fine art^g aims to depict, the model for painting and poetry, is not the Idea but the particular thing. The whole of our discussion up to this point claims precisely the opposite, and Plato’s opinion is not so much misleading for us as it is the source of one of the greatest and acknowledged errors of that great man, namely his disdain and dismissal of art, and poetry in particular: he directly connects his false judgement in this matter to the passage cited here.

§ 42

I return to our discussion of the aesthetic impression. Cognition of the beautiful always posits the pure cognizing subject at the same time as, and inseparably from, the cognition of the Idea as object. And yet the source of aesthetic pleasure will sometimes be located more in the apprehension of the Ideas that are cognized, and sometimes more in the happiness and peace of mind of pure cognition that has been liberated from all willing and thus from all individuality and the pain that comes from it: and certainly this preponderance of one or the other component of aesthetic pleasure will depend on whether the intuitively apprehended Idea is a higher or lower level of the objecthood of the will. So with aesthetic contemplation of natural beauty in the inorganic realm, in the vegetable world, or in beautiful works of architecture (either in reality, or through the medium of art), the pleasure of pure will-less cognition will predominate, because the Ideas apprehended here are only the low levels of the objecthood of the will, and thus these appearances do not have any profound meaning or interpretive richness. By contrast, when animals or people are the object of aesthetic contemplation or presentation, the pleasure will consist more in the objective apprehension of these Ideas, which are the clearest manifestations^h of the will; this is because these exhibit the greatest multitude of forms, as well as a

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^aSee *Republic* 596b–597d, *Parmenides* 130b–e.

^bsich aussprechen.

^cὁ Πλάτων εφη, ὅτι εἶδη ἐστὶν ὅποσα φύσει. (*Plato dixit, quod ideae eorum sunt, quae natura*) [*Metaphysics* Λ (XII), 3, 1070a18].

^dintroductio in Platoniam philosophiam.

^eὍριζονται δὲ τὴν ἰδεάν, παραδείγμα τῶν κατὰ φύσιν αἰωνίων. Οὐτε γὰρ τοῖς πλείστοις τῶν ἀπὸ Πλάτωνος ἀρεσκει, τῶν τεχνικῶν εἶναι ἰδεάς, ὅλον ἀσπίδος ἢ λυράς, οὐτε μὴν τῶν παρὰ φύσιν, ὅλον πυρετοῦ καὶ χολέρας, οὐτε τῶν κατὰ μέρος, ὅλον Σωκράτους καὶ Πλάτωνος, ἀλλ’ οὐτε τῶν εὐτελῶν τινος, ὅλον ρυπῶν καὶ καρφῶν, οὐτε τῶν πρὸς τι, ὅλον μείζονος καὶ ὑπερεχόντος εἶναι γὰρ τὰς ἰδεάς νοήσεις θεοῦ αἰωνίου τε καὶ αὐτοτελείς. – (*Definiunt autem ideam exemplar aeternum eorum, quae secundum naturam existunt. Nam plurimis ex iis, qui Platonem secuti sunt, minime placuit, arte factorum ideas esse, ut clypei atque lyrae; neque rursus eorum, quae praeter naturam, ut febris et cholerae; neque particularium, ceu Socratis et Platonis; neque etiam rerum vilium, veluti sordium et festucae; neque relationum, ut majoris et excedentis; esse namque ideas intellectiones dei aeternas, ac seipsas perfectas.*)

^fSee *Republic* 600c–602c

^gschöne Kunst.

^hOffenbarungen.

wealth of profoundly significant appearances, and reveal^a the essence of the will to us most completely, whether in its intensity, horror, satisfaction, or broken state (this last in tragic portrayals), or finally even in its turning^b or self-abolition,^c which is the theme of Christian painting in particular, just as historical painting and drama generally have as their object the Idea of the will illuminated by complete cognition. – We will now review the arts one by one, which will lend completion and clarity to the theory of beauty we have presented.

§ 43

Matter as such cannot be the presentation of an Idea. This is because, as we discovered in the First Book, it is causality through and through: its being is nothing but acting.^d Now causality is a form of the principle of sufficient reason: cognition of the Idea, by contrast, essentially excludes the content of that principle. And in the Second Book we discovered matter to be the common substrate of all particular appearances of the Ideas, and consequently to be the link between the Idea and the appearance or particular thing. Thus for the one reason as much as for the other, matter by itself cannot present any Ideas. This is also confirmed *a posteriori* by the fact that there can be absolutely no intuitive representation of matter as such but only an abstract concept: intuitive representations present only the forms and qualities supported by matter, and in all of which Ideas reveal themselves. This also corresponds to the fact that only a particular causal connection can be presented in intuition, not causality itself (the entire essence of matter). – But on the other hand, every *appearance* of an Idea, since it has entered as such into the form of the principle of sufficient reason, or into the *principium individuationis*, must present itself in matter as a material quality. To this extent, as we have said, matter is the link connecting the Idea with the *principium individuationis* (which is the individual's form of cognition), or the principle of sufficient reason. – Hence, Plato quite cor-

rectly established matter as a third thing, alongside but distinct from the Idea and its appearance (the individual thing), which together account for everything else in the world (*Timaeus*, p. 345^e). As appearance of the Idea, the individual is always material.^f Every quality of matter is also always the appearance of an Idea, and as such is able to be the object of aesthetic contemplation as well, i.e. we can have cognition of the Idea presented in it. This applies even to the most general^g qualities of matter, qualities that it never lacks and whose Ideas are the weakest objecthood of the will. These are: gravity, cohesion, rigidity, fluidity, reaction to light, etc.

When we consider *architecture*^h merely as a fine art,ⁱ leaving aside its utilitarian function, where it serves the will rather than pure cognition, and is thus no longer art in our sense; then the only intention we can attribute to it is that of bringing some of the Ideas at the lowest levels of the objecthood of the will more clearly into intuition, namely: gravity, cohesion, rigidity, hardness, these universal qualities of stone, those first, simplest and dullest visibilities of the will, the sounds of the ground bass of nature;^j and then, alongside these, light, which is in many respects their opposite. Even at this low level of the objecthood of the will we already see its essence manifesting itself in discord: because the struggle between gravity and rigidity is in fact the only aesthetic content of fine architecture:^k its task is to let this content come to the fore with complete clarity and in a variety of different ways. It performs this task by depriving these indestructible forces of their shortest path to fulfilment, and detaining them along a detour that prolongs the struggle and makes the inexhaustible striving of both forces visible in a variety of different ways. – If left to its original inclination, the building's entire mass would present a mere lump clinging to the surface of the earth as tightly as possible, urged ceaselessly in this direction by gravity (which is how the will appears here) while resisted by rigidity, which is likewise the objecthood of the will. But this very

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^e*Timaeus* 48–9.

^f*Materie*.

^g*allgemeinsten*.

^h*Baukunst*.

ⁱ*schöne Kunst*.

^j*Grundbaßsteine der Natur*.

^k*schönen Architektur*.

^a*offenbaren*.

^b*Wendung*.

^c*Selbstaufhebung*.

^d*Wirken*.

inclination, this striving, is what architecture prevents from attaining immediate satisfaction, allowing it only indirect and roundabout satisfaction. So for instance a beam can press towards the ground only by means of a column; the dome has to be its own support, and can only satisfy its striving towards the mass of the earth by means of pillars, etc. But it is precisely along these forced detours, through these very obstacles, that the forces subsisting in the mass of raw stone develop themselves in the clearest and most varied way: and the purely aesthetic goal of architecture can go no further than this. Thus the beauty of a building certainly lies in the conspicuous purposiveness^a of each part, not for some external and arbitrary human purpose (to this extent, the work belongs to practical architecture), but rather immediately for the existence^b of the whole; the relation of the position, size and form of each part to this whole must be so necessary that, as far as possible, the removal of any part would bring it down. Because only when each part supports as much as it properly can, and each is supported exactly where and exactly as much as it needs to be, does that opposition,^c that struggle between rigidity and gravity which constitutes both the stone's life and expressions of will, develop itself to the most complete visibility, and these lowest levels of the objecthood of the will reveal themselves clearly. Similarly, the shape of each part must be determined only by its purpose and relation to the whole rather than arbitrarily. Columns are the very simplest form of support, determined solely by their goal: winding columns are tasteless: square pillars are in fact not as simple, although they happen to be easier to make than round columns. The forms of the frieze, the joist, the arch and the dome^d are likewise determined entirely by their immediate goals and are self-explanatory given these goals. Ornamentation of the capital etc. belongs to sculpture, not architecture, and, as added decoration, is merely tolerated but can be omitted as well. – Given what we have said, in order to understand or take aesthetic pleasure in a work of architecture it is indispensa-

bly necessary to have an immediate and intuitive acquaintance^e with the weight, rigidity and cohesion of its material, and our enjoyment of such a work is suddenly and sharply diminished by the disclosure that the building is made of pumice-stone, because then it would strike us as a kind of fake building.^f It would almost be the same if we were to find out that it is only made of wood when we had thought it was stone, precisely because this now alters and shifts the relation between rigidity and gravity, and thus the significance and necessity of all the parts, since those natural forces reveal themselves much more weakly in buildings made of wood. This is also why works of fine architecture really cannot be made of wood, however many forms it can assume: our theory is the only one able to explain this. But also: if we are told that the building we enjoy looking at is made of very diverse materials with wildly disparate weights and consistencies, but which cannot be told apart by sight, the whole building would become as disagreeable to us as a poem in a language we do not understand. All this goes to show that architecture operates not only mathematically but also dynamically, and that what speaks to us in architecture is not just something like form and symmetry, but those basic forces of nature, those primary Ideas, those lowest levels of the objecthood of the will. – The regularity of a building and its parts is brought about in part by the immediate purposiveness of each part for the existence^g of the whole; but in part the regularity also helps facilitate an overview and understanding of the whole; and finally, in part, the regularity of the figures contributes to its beauty by revealing the lawlike character^h of space as such. But all of this has only subordinate value and necessity and is by no means the main point; even symmetry is not indispensable, since ruins can be beautiful as well.

Now works of architecture have a very special relation to light: they double their beauty in full sunlight with blue sky in the background, and have a completely different effect again in moonlight. Thus, when a work of fine architecture is being built, particular attention is paid to the

^a*Zweckmäßigkeit.*

^b*Bestand.*

^c*Widerspiel.*

^d*Kuppel.*

^e*Kenntniss.*

^f*Scheingebäude*

^g*Bestand.*

^h*Gesetzmäßigkeit.*

effects of light and the celestial orientation.^a The main reason for this is that all the parts and their relations really only become visible in bright clear light: but besides this, it is my opinion that architecture is not only meant to reveal gravity and rigidity, but also at the same time it is meant to reveal the essence of light, which is the complete opposite of these. Since light is intercepted, blocked and reflected by the huge, opaque, clearly delineated and multiform masses, its nature and properties are unfolded most purely and distinctly, and this to the great pleasure of the viewer, since light is the most enjoyable of things, as the condition and the objective correlate of the most perfect mode of intuitive cognition.

Now because the Ideas that are brought into clear intuition through architecture are the lowest levels of the objecthood of the will, and consequently the objective significance of what architecture reveals to us is relatively small, the aesthetic pleasure we feel in looking at a beautiful and favourably illuminated building lies not so much in the apprehension of the Idea as in the subjective correlate introduced along with this apprehension, and thus consists predominantly in the fact that this sight tears the viewer away from – and raises him above – the mode of cognition that individuals possess, a mode that serves the will and follows the principle of sufficient reason, to that of the pure subject of cognition, free from the will, and thus to pure contemplation itself which is freed from all the suffering of willing and individuality. – In this respect, the converse of architecture and the opposite extreme in the series of fine arts is drama, which brings to cognition the most significant Ideas of all. This is why the objective side is overwhelmingly dominant in the sense of aesthetic pleasure we feel with drama.

256 Architecture is distinct from the visual arts^b and poetry in that it does not produce an *imitation*^c but rather the thing itself: it does not repeat the Idea that is cognized, as those other arts do in which the artist lends the viewer his eyes; rather, in this case the artist orients the object properly for the viewer and facilitates his apprehension of the Idea by making the actual individual object express its essence clearly and completely.

^a*Himmelsgegenden.*

^b*bildenden Künsten.*

^c*Nachbild.*

Unlike other works of fine art, works of architecture are very seldom constructed for purely aesthetic purposes: instead, these are subordinated to other, practical purposes that are foreign to art itself, and so the great merit of the architect consists in carrying through the purely aesthetic goals in spite of their subordination to foreign ones, and achieving them by skilfully adapting them in a variety of different ways to each of the arbitrary goals, and judging correctly which aesthetic-architectonic beauty would suit and be joined to a temple, which to a palace, which to an armoury,^d etc. The more a harsh climate steps up the demands of necessity, of practicality, determining them more tightly and prescribing them more imperatively, the less room there is for beauty in architecture. In the mild climates of India, Egypt, Greece and Rome, where the demands of necessity were fewer in number and more loosely determined, architecture was most at liberty to follow its aesthetic goals: these were tightly constrained under the northern skies. Here, where coffers,^e pointed roofs and towers were required, architecture could develop its own beauty only in very restricted quarters, and had instead to embellish itself all the more with decorative elements borrowed from sculpture, as can be seen in fine Gothic architecture.

If, in this way, architecture suffers under great restrictions through the demands of necessity and practicality; then on the other hand, this provided it with a powerful support, since, given the scope and the expense of its works and the narrow sphere of its aesthetic effect, it could not sustain itself purely as a fine art if it did not at the same time have a secure and honourable position among the human professions as a useful and necessary occupation. It is a deficiency in this regard that prevents another art from standing at its side as its sister, although from an aesthetic perspective it would certainly stand as the partner of architecture: I am talking about fountainry as a fine art.^f This is because architecture is to the Idea of gravity (where this appears combined with rigidity) what fountainry is to that same Idea where it is associated with fluidity, i.e. formlessness,

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^d*Zeughause.*

^e*Kasten.*

^f*schöne Wasserleitungskunst.*

transparency, the most effortless mobility. Foaming and roaring waterfalls that plunge over rocks, peaceful cascades dispersing into spray, springs gushing upwards as high columns of water, and clear reflective lakes reveal the Ideas of fluid and heavy matter just as architectural works exhibit the Ideas of rigid matter. Practical hydraulics^a offers no support to fountainry as a fine art, since the goal of the latter generally cannot be united with that of the former, apart from certain exceptional cases, for instance in the Trevi Fountain^b in Rome.

§ 44

In a certain way, landscape gardening^c performs the same service for the higher levels of vegetable nature that the artforms just mentioned perform for the lowest levels of the objecthood of the will. For the most part the scenic^d beauty of a spot depends on the diversity of the natural objects found together in it, and thus on the fact that these objects are clearly separated from each other and emerge distinctly while presenting themselves in an appropriate combination and variation. These are the two conditions that landscape gardening promotes; nonetheless it does not exert nearly as much control over its material as architecture does over its material, and so its effect is limited. The beauty landscape gardening displays belongs almost entirely to nature: landscape gardening itself adds little to it: and on the other hand, it cannot accomplish very much in the face of unfavourable natural conditions; when nature is its adversary and not its ally, its achievements are meagre.

Since the plant kingdom offers itself everywhere to aesthetic pleasure without the intervention of art, it belongs primarily to landscape painting to the extent that it is an object of art. The rest of nature, in as much as it lacks cognition, also falls, along with the plant kingdom, into the province of landscape painting. – With still lifes and paintings of unadorned architecture, ruins, church interiors and the like, the subjective side of aesthetic pleasure predominates: that is to say, our

delight in them does not lie primarily in the immediate apprehension of the Ideas presented, but rather more in the subjective correlate of this apprehension, in pure cognition free of the will; since the painter allows us to see things through his eyes, we share both in the sensation here as well as in the afterglow^e of the profound peace of mind and complete silencing of the will that were needed to submerge cognition so completely in those lifeless objects and to apprehend them with such affection, i.e. with such a degree of objectivity^f – Now on the whole, genuine landscape painting has this sort of effect as well: but because the Ideas it presents are higher levels of the objecthood of the will and are thus more significant and substantial, the objective aspect of aesthetic pleasure comes more to the fore and balances out the subjective side. Pure cognition as such is no longer completely the principal concern; instead, the Idea that is cognized, the world as representation on a significant level of the objectivation of the will, operates with equal power.

[. . .]

§ 45

Finally, the great task of historical painting and of sculpture is the immediate and intuitive presentation of the Idea in which the will reaches the highest grade of its objectivation. The objective aspect of delight in beauty is completely predominant here, and the subjective side has retreated into the background. It should also be noted that in animal painting (the level immediately below this one), what is characteristic is entirely identical with what is beautiful: the most characteristic lion, wolf, horse, sheep, bull has always been the most beautiful as well. This is because animals do not have character as individuals – their only character is that of the species. But in the portrayal of human beings, the species character is separate from the character of the individual: the former is called beauty (entirely in the objective sense), while the latter retains the name character or expression, and the new difficulty emerges of portraying both of them together fully in any given individual.

^anützliche Wasserleitungskunst.

^bCascata di Trevi.

^cschöne Gartenkunst.

^dlandschaftliche.

^eeine Mitempfindung und das Nachgefühl.

^fObjektivität.

Human beauty is an objective expression that signifies the most complete objectivation of the will on the highest level at which it can be cognized, the complete expression in intuitive form of the Idea of a human being as such. But however strongly the objective side of beauty comes to the fore here, the subjective side remains its constant companion. No object draws us into purely aesthetic intuition^a as readily as the most beautiful human face and figure, the sight of which immediately suffuses us with an inexpressible pleasure^b and raises us above ourselves and all that ails us;^c but this is possible only by virtue of the fact that this clearest and purest susceptibility of the will to cognition^d is also what transports us most quickly and readily into the state of pure cognition, a state in which our personality, our willing with its constant agony, disappears for as long as the pure, aesthetic delight continues: thus Goethe says: 'Whoever looks on human beauty cannot be touched by evils: he feels himself in harmony with the world and with himself.'^e – We must explain how nature can achieve a beautiful human figure by means of the fact that the will objectifies itself at this highest level in an individual and thereby completely overwhelms (both through fortunate circumstances as well as through its own force) all the obstacles and resistance put up against it by the lower levels of the will's appearance, which are the natural forces, from which the will must first win over and wrest away the matter that belongs to all of them. Furthermore, the appearance of the will on the highest levels always possesses multiplicity in its form: even the tree is only a systematic aggregate of innumerable repeated sprouting fibres: this compounding of structure^f increases more and more the higher we ascend, and the human body is a highly intricate^g system of very different parts, each of which lives in subordination to the whole while also possessing its own distinctive life, its *vita propria*: but the fact that all these parts are subordinated to the whole and co-ordinated with each other in precisely the right way, the fact that they

conspire to present the whole in a harmonious manner, with nothing excessive and nothing curtailed; – together, these are the rare conditions that result in beauty, the perfect expression^h of the species character. – Thus nature. But what of art? – It is said to be the imitationⁱ of nature. – But how is the artist supposed to recognize the successful work of nature that is to be imitated and to find it among the unsuccessful works unless he anticipates the beautiful *prior to experience*? Moreover, has nature ever really produced a human being every part of whom was completely beautiful? – This is why it is said that the artist has to sort through many people to find scattered, individual beautiful parts and combine them into a beautiful whole: an absurd and meaningless view, since it refers us right back to the question of how he is supposed to recognize precisely these forms as beautiful and the others not? – We can see how far the old German painters got with beauty by means of the imitation of nature. Just look at their nudes. – No cognition of beauty is possible purely *a posteriori* and from mere experience: it is always at least partly *a priori*, although it is entirely different from the modes of the principle of sufficient reason that we are conscious of *a priori*. These concern the universal form of appearance as such, in so far as this form grounds the possibility of cognition in general, the universal *How* of appearing, which allows for no exceptions: both mathematics and the pure natural sciences proceed from this cognition. By contrast, the other type of cognition *a priori*, which makes possible the presentation of the beautiful, concerns the content of appearances instead of the form, the *What* of appearing instead of the *How*. We all recognize human beauty when we see it, but in true artists this recognition takes place with such clarity that they show us beauty they themselves have never seen and surpass nature in their portrayals; this is possible only because *we ourselves* are the will whose adequate objectivation on its highest level should be judged and discovered here. This alone allows us to anticipate what nature (which is of course the very will that constitutes our own essence) is at pains to present; in a true genius this anticipation is accompanied by a degree of mental clarity^j that enables him

^aAnschauen.

^bWohlgefallen.

^cAlles was uns quält.

^dErkennbarkeit des Willens.

^eDie Wahlverwandschaften (*Elective Affinities*), 1, 6.

^fZusammensetzung.

^gkombiniert.

^hvollkommen ausgeprägt.

ⁱNachahmung.

^jBesonnenheit.

to look at particular things and recognize the *Idea*, as if he *understands nature's half-spoken words*, and then clearly enunciates what nature only stutters, imprinting in solid marble the beauty of the form that nature fails to achieve after a thousand attempts, confronting nature as if to call out to her: 'This is what you wanted to say!' and 'Yes, that was it!' is the reply of the knowing connoisseur.^a [. . .]

Human beauty was explained above as the most complete objectivation of the will at the highest level on which it can be cognized. It expresses itself through form, which lies only in space, and has no necessary reference to time, as does motion, for instance. To this extent we can say: beauty in the objective sense is the adequate objectivation of the will through a purely spatial appearance. Plants are nothing other than such purely spatial appearances of the will; the expression of their essence does not entail motion, and consequently makes no reference to time (apart from their development): their mere shape^b expresses their essence and exhibits it openly. But a complete revelation of the will appearing in animals and human beings requires in addition a series of actions through which their appearing is referred immediately to time. All this was mentioned already in the previous Book: it is relevant to our present discussion in the following way. Just as the purely spatial appearance of the will can objectify the will more or less completely on every particular level (thereby constituting beauty or ugliness), so too the temporal objectivation of the will (i.e. action, and indeed immediate action, which is to say movement) can correspond purely and completely to the will that objectifies itself in it, with no foreign admixture, nothing superfluous, no deficiencies, expressing precisely the particular act of will in question; – or it can all happen the other way around. In the first case the motion is *graceful*;^c in the second it is not. Thus, just as beauty is the fitting^d presentation of the will in general through its purely spatial appearance, *grace* is the fitting presentation of the will through its temporal appearance, i.e. the absolutely correct and appropriate expression of that

act of will through the movement and posture^e objectified in it. Since movement and posture already presuppose the body, Winckelmann expresses himself very correctly and aptly when he says: 'grace is the proper relation of the person who acts to the action' (*Works*, Vol. 1, p. 258). It is obvious that while plants can certainly be considered beautiful, they can only be described as graceful in a figurative sense; but animals and human beings can be both beautiful and graceful. According to what we have said, grace consists in the fact that every movement and posture is executed in the easiest, most appropriate and most comfortable manner, and is thus the entirely fitting expression of its intention, or the act of will, without anything superfluous (which would present itself in the form of a self-defeating and unnecessary busyness or contorted posture) or anything lacking (which would present itself as wooden stiffness). Grace presupposes as its condition a correct proportion of all limbs and a regular and harmonious physique; only in this way is complete ease and evident purposiveness in all postures and movements possible: grace is therefore never without a certain degree of corporeal beauty. When the two are complete and united they are the clearest appearance of the will at the highest level of its objectivation.

As mentioned above, one of the distinguishing features of humanity is that the character of the species is separate from that of the individual so that to a certain extent, as we said in the previous Book, each human being presents a completely distinctive *Idea*. Thus, along with beauty as the character of the species, the arts devoted to the presentation of the *Idea* of humanity are also concerned with the character of the individual, which is what we really mean by *character*. But this is true only to the extent that character is not seen as something contingent, something wholly and completely idiosyncratic to the individual in his particularity,^f but rather as an aspect of the *Idea* of humanity that happens to be particularly pronounced in this individual so that the presentation of this individual serves to reveal this aspect of the *Idea*. Thus, although character as such is individual, it must nonetheless be apprehended

^ahallt es aus dem Kenner wider.

^bGestalt.

^cmit Grazie.

^dentsprechende.

^eStellung.

^fEinzelheit.

and presented in ideal terms, i.e. with an emphasis on its significance to the Idea of humanity in general (it contributes in its own way to the objectivation of this Idea): if this is not done, then the presentation becomes a portrait, a repetition of the particular as such, with all its contingencies. And as Winckelmann says, even the portrait should be the ideal of the individual.

This *character*, which is to be apprehended in ideal terms and which emphasizes one of the particular aspects of the Idea of humanity, presents itself visibly, in part through the enduring physiognomy and body structure^d and in part through fleeting emotion and passion, the reciprocal modification of cognition and willing, all of which is expressed through facial expression and movement. The individual always belongs to humanity and humanity, for its part, is always revealed in the individual (indeed in the particular and ideal significance of that individual); as a result, beauty ought not to be annulled by character, nor character by beauty because if the species character were annulled by that of the individual, the result would be caricature, and were the individual character to be annulled by that of the species, the result would be insignificance. Thus, a portrayal^b that is intended to be beautiful (as is primarily the case with sculpture) will nonetheless always modify the species character to some extent by the individual character and always express the Idea of humanity in a determinate, individualized manner, emphasizing a particular aspect of this Idea; this is because to a certain extent, the human individual as such has the dignity^c of an Idea of his own, and it is essential to the Idea of humanity that it present itself in individuals of particular significance. Hence we find in the works of the ancients that the beauty they apprehend so clearly is not expressed through a single form but rather through many forms that bear different characters, as if it was always grasped from a different side, and, accordingly, displayed differently in Apollo, differently in Bacchus, differently in Hercules, and differently in Antinous: indeed, what is characteristic can constrain the beautiful and ultimately even cross over into ugliness in the drunken Silenus, in fauns, etc. But if what is char-

acteristic is really taken to the point of annulling the character of the species, which is to say to the point of being unnatural, then it becomes caricature. – But we must prevent the characteristic from detracting from grace even more than from beauty, because expression of character requires graceful posture and movement as well, and so it must be carried out in a way that is easiest and most expedient^d for the person concerned. Not only the sculptor and the painter but every good playwright will observe this: otherwise here too you will only get caricature in the form of distortion and contortion.

Sculpture is concerned primarily with beauty and grace. The true character of the spirit, which comes forward in affect, passion, interplay of cognition and willing, and which can only be portrayed through gesture and facial expression, is chiefly the province of *painting*. Although eyes and colouring (which lie outside the purview of sculpture) contribute greatly to beauty, they are much more essential to character. Moreover, beauty unfolds itself more completely when observed from several points of view: by contrast, the expression, the character can be apprehended perfectly from even a *single* standpoint.

[. . .]

§ 49

All of our observations so far concerning art are grounded in the truth that the object of art that the artist aims to portray and that the artist must cognize prior to his work as its seed and origin, – is absolutely nothing other than an *Idea* in Plato's sense: it is not the individual thing, the object of our common apprehension, nor is it the concept, the object of rational thought and science. Although Idea and concept have something in common, namely the fact that as unities both stand for^e a multiplicity of actual things, yet the great difference between the two will have become clear and convincing enough from what was said in the First Book about the concept and what is being said in the present Book about the Idea. I certainly do not mean to say that Plato had a clear conception of this distinction: in fact,

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^aKorporisation.

^bDarstellung.

^cDignität.

^dzweckmäßigste.

^evertreten.

many of his examples and descriptions of Ideas are applicable only to concepts. For now we will leave this as it is and go our own way, glad whenever we come across the trace of a great and noble mind, but nonetheless following our goal instead of his footsteps. – *Concepts* are abstract, discursive; they are determinate only with respect to their boundaries, within their spheres they are completely indeterminate. They are accessible and comprehensible to anyone in possession of reason; they can be communicated verbally without any further mediation, and are entirely exhausted by their definitions. By contrast, *Ideas*, which are perhaps best defined as adequate representatives^a of concepts, are thoroughly intuitive and, despite the fact that they stand for an infinite number of particular things, they are nonetheless thoroughly determinate: they are never cognized by individuals as such, but only by someone who has raised himself above all willing and all individuality to become the pure subject of cognition: accordingly, they are accessible only to the genius and hence also to someone who, through an elevation of his cognitive powers usually occasioned by the works of a genius, is in the same state of mind as a genius:^b this is why the *Ideas* are not absolutely but only conditionally communicable, since the *Idea* grasped and repeated in the work of art speaks to people only in proportion to their own intellectual value; which is why precisely the most excellent works of every art, the noblest products of genius, will always and necessarily remain closed books for the obtuse majority, inaccessible to them and separated from them by a wide gulf, just as the society of the prince is inaccessible to the rabble. Of course even the dullest accept on authority works acknowledged to be great so as not to betray their own weakness: still, they are always quietly ready to condemn such works as soon as they can hope to do so without exposing themselves, at which point they gladly give vent to their long-concealed hatred of everything great and beautiful, of works that humiliated them by never speaking to them, and their hatred of the authors of these works. In general, one must have value oneself in order freely and willingly to acknowledge value in another. This is the basis for the requirement that modesty

accompany all merits, as well as the disproportionately loud praise for this virtue which alone, among all its sisters, is always added to the praise of anyone distinguished in some way by the person who dares to praise him, so as to conciliate the worthless and silence their wrath. For what is modesty if not false humility which someone with merits and advantages in a world teeming with perfidious envy uses to beg the pardon of those who have none? Someone who does not lay claim to merit because he in fact has none is being honest, not modest.

The *Idea* is unity shattered into multiplicity through the temporal and spatial form of our intuitive^c apprehension: the *concept* on the other hand is unity reassembled from plurality by means of the abstraction of our reason: it can be designated as unity after the fact, and the *Idea* as unity before the fact.^d Finally, the distinction between concept and *Idea* can be expressed figuratively by saying: *concepts* are like dead receptacles; what we place inside actually lies next to each other, and we cannot take out more (through analytic judgements) than we have put in (through synthetic reflection): in those who have grasped them, on the other hand, *Ideas* develop representations that are novel with respect to concepts sharing the same name: the *Idea* is like a living and developing organism endowed with generative powers, an organism that can produce things that were not already packaged up inside it.

Now it follows from everything we have said that as useful as the concept is for life, and as practical, necessary and fruitful as it is for science, it will always be barren for art. By contrast, the apprehended *Idea* is the true and unique source for every genuine work of art. In its forceful originality it is drawn only from life itself, from nature, from the world, and also only from true genius or someone momentarily inspired^e to the point of genius. Genuine works bearing eternal life arise only from such an immediate conception.^f

Precisely because the *Idea* is and remains intuitive, the artist is not conscious of the intent and purpose of his work abstractly;^g an *Idea* rather

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^aRepräsentant.

^bin einer genialen Stimmung.

^cintuitiv.

^dunitas post rem ... unitas ante rem.

^eBegeisterten.

^funmittelbar Empfangniß.

^gin abstracto.

than a concept hovers before him: this is why he cannot give an account of what he does: he is driven merely by feelings, as people like to say, and works unconsciously, even instinctively. By contrast, imitators,^a mannerists, *imitatores*, *servum pecus*,^b approach art from the concept: they take note of what is effective and pleasing in genuine works of art, clarify this to themselves, grasp it in a concept and hence abstractly, and then imitate it, overtly or covertly, with shrewd intent. They suck nourishment from the works of others like parasitic plants, and they take on the colours of this nutriment like polyps. In fact, we could take this comparison even further and assert that they are like machines that can certainly grind and mix together whatever is put in them, but can never digest it, so that the foreign components can always be rediscovered, picked out of the mixture, and separated: only the genius is like an organic body^c that assimilates, transforms and produces. He is certainly cultivated and educated by his predecessors and their works, but it is only by life and the world itself that he is made directly fertile, only by the impression of what can be intuited: thus, even the highest level of cultivation will never detract from his originality. All imitators and mannerists grasp the essence of other people's exemplary achievements in concepts; but concepts can never endow a work with inner life. The age, which is to say the dull and obtuse multitude always found in the age, is familiar with concepts alone and clings to them, so that it receives mannerist works with ready and noisy approval: but these same works will be unpalatable after a few years, because the spirit of the age, i.e. the predominant concepts in which alone these works are rooted, will themselves have changed. Only genuine works that are drawn directly from nature and from life remain forever young and eternally forceful,^d like nature and life themselves. They do not belong to any age, but rather to humanity itself, which is why they are met with lukewarm receptions in their own ages (to which they disdain to conform); and since they indirectly and negatively exposed the errors of their own ages, they received only belated and grudging recognition. Yet this is also why they do

not grow old but instead retain a fresh and new appeal for even the most distant ages: then they are no longer exposed to neglect and misunderstanding, because they are crowned and sanctioned by the approval of the few minds^e capable of judging, minds that appear at rare and isolated times through the centuries^f and cast the ballots that slowly accumulate and thus ground the authority that alone constitutes the seat of judgement people have in mind when they appeal to posterity. It is only those successively appearing individuals, because the masses and mobs of posterity will for all times be and remain just as wrong-headed and stupid as the masses and mobs of the contemporary world always are and have always been. – Just read the complaints of the great minds^g of every century concerning their contemporaries: they always sound the same as they do today, because the human race is always the same. In every age and in every art, style^h takes the place of the spirit,ⁱ which is only ever the property of the few: but style is the old, discarded garb of the last known appearance of spirit. In view of all this, the approval of posterity is only purchased as a rule at the cost of the approval of the present, and vice versa.

[. . .]

§ 51

Now if we take what we have said so far about art in general and turn from the visual arts to *poetry*,ⁱ we will have no doubt that it too aims to reveal the Ideas, the levels of objectivation of the will, and to communicate them to the listener with the clarity and vivacity with which the poetic mind^j grasps them. Ideas are essentially intuitive: if, therefore, only abstract concepts are directly communicated by means of words in poetry, it is nevertheless clear that the aim is still to allow the listener to intuit the Ideas of life in

^a*Nachahmer*.

^bImitators, servile herd: Horace, *Letters*, 1, 19, 19.

^c*Leib*.

^d*urkräftig*.

^e*Apparent rari, nantes in gurgite vasto* [They appear singly, swimming on the desolate waves] (Virgil, *Aeneid* I, 118).

^f*Köpfe*.

^g*Geister*.

^h*Manier*.

ⁱ*Geist*.

^j*Poesie*.

^k*das dichterische Gemüth*.

the representatives^a of these concepts, something that can take place only with the help of the listener's own imagination.^b But in order to put this into effect given the goal, the abstract concepts (which are the immediate material of poetry just as they are of the driest prose) must be arranged in such a way that the pattern of intersection of their spheres ensures that no concept can persist in its abstract generality; instead an intuitive representative appears before the imagination and the poet's words continually modify this in keeping with his intentions. Just as the chemist is able to distil out solid precipitates by combining completely clear and transparent liquids, similarly the poet understands how to connect the abstract, transparent generality of concepts in order to precipitate out, as it were, what is concrete and individual, the intuitive representation. This is because the Idea can be cognized only intuitively, and knowledge of the Idea is the goal of all art. Excellence in poetry, as in chemistry, allows one to consistently obtain precisely the precipitate one has in mind. The many epithets of poetry serve this end, epithets that keep restricting the generality of some concept to the point where it can be intuited. For almost every noun, Homer introduces an adjective whose concept divides the sphere of the noun, at once greatly reducing the sphere of its concept and bringing it that much closer to intuition. For instance:

Helios' glowing lamp sank into the ocean,
Pulling the dark night over the food-growing earth.^c

And

Soft blows the wind that breathes from that blue sky!
Still stands the myrtle and the laurel high^d

uses only a few concepts to precipitate out before the imagination the full bliss of a southern climate.

^aRepräsentanten.

^bPhantasie.

^cἘν δ' ἐπεὶ Ὠκεανῷ λαμπρὸν φῶς ἡλίοιο, | Ἐλκὼν
νυκτὰ μελαιναὶ ἐπὶ ζειδῶρον ἀρουραν. (*Occidit vero
in Oceanum splendidum lumen solis, | Trahens noctem
nigram super almam terram.*) [*Iliad* VIII. 485].

^dGoethe, *Balladen*, 'Mignon', translation by Coleridge.

Rhythm and rhyme are very special resources for poetry. I can think of no other way to explain their incredibly powerful effect than this: owing to their fundamental connection to time, our representational faculties^e have a peculiarity that makes us follow any regularly recurring sound internally and join in, as it were. Rhythm and rhyme thus become a way of holding our attention, since we follow the performance more willingly; but also they lead us, blindly and prior to any judgement, to chime in with the performance – and this gives it a definite and emphatic power of persuasion, independent of all reasons.

Because poetry communicates the Ideas using material that is general, i.e. concepts, it covers a considerable amount of territory. The whole of nature, the Ideas of all levels can be portrayed by poetry which, according to the standard of the Idea to be communicated, proceeds sometimes with descriptions, sometimes with narrations, and sometimes with direct dramatic portrayals. The visual arts typically surpass poetry in the portrayal of the lower levels of the objecthood of the will because nature devoid of cognition, as well as merely animal nature, reveals almost its entire essence in a single well-chosen moment. By contrast, human beings are the principal concern of poetry to the extent that they do not express themselves merely through their figure and face, but through a chain of actions and the thoughts and affects that accompany these actions. No other art can equal poetry in this, because it can make use of progressive change, while the visual arts cannot.

The great subject-matter of poetry is thus the revelation of the Idea that is the highest level of the will's objecthood, the presentation of human beings in the inter-connected series of their actions and endeavours. – Of course we get to know humanity through experience and history as well, but these tell us more about *human beings*^f than about *humanity* itself:^g i.e. they furnish empirical information about human behaviour (from which we can derive rules for our own conduct) rather than allowing us to look deeply into the inner essence of humanity. Of course nothing

^eVorstellungskräfte.

^fdie Menschen.

^gden Menschen.

prevents experience and history from undertaking this: nevertheless, when it is the essence of humanity itself that is unlocked for us through history or through our own experience, then we have already grasped the latter (and the historian the former) with artistic eyes, already grasped it poetically, i.e. according to the Idea and not the appearance, according to its inner essence and not its relations. Our own experience is as indispensable a condition for understanding literature^a as it is for history because it is, as it were, the lexicon of the language spoken by both. But history really is to poetry what portrait painting is to historical painting: the former gives what is true in particular, the latter what is true in general; the former has the truth of appearance, and can attest to it on this basis; the latter has the truth of the Idea, which cannot be found in any individual appearance but nonetheless speaks out of all of them. Poets are selective and deliberative in placing significant characters in significant situations: historians take both as they come. In fact, they must examine and select events and people not according to their inner, true significance, expressive of the Idea, but according to the outer, illusory,^b relative significance that is important with reference to its connections, its consequences. They cannot consider anything in and of itself, according to its essential character and expression, but must always consider everything according to its relations, within a network, in its influence on what follows and indeed particularly on their own age. So they will not skip over an insignificant action on the part of a king, an act in itself quite ordinary, because this act has consequences and influences. On the other hand, they will not mention actions of very distinguished individuals that might be quite significant in themselves but have no consequences, no influence. This is because their view conforms to the principle of sufficient reason and rakes hold of appearance, whose form this principle is. Poets however grasp the Idea, the essence of humanity outside of all relations, outside of all time, the adequate objecthood of the thing in itself on its highest level. Even if the inner essence, the significance of appearances, the kernel of all those shells can never be completely lost in the historian's way of

looking at things, and can still be found and recognized (at least by those who are looking for it); nonetheless, what is significant in itself and not in its relations, the authentic unfolding of the Idea, can be found with far greater accuracy and much more clarity in poetry than in history, and so, as paradoxical as it might sound, poetry can be credited with much more authentic, genuine, inner truth than can be attributed to history. [. . .]

I must say that even biographies, particularly autobiographies, have a greater value than authentic history with respect to knowledge^c of the essence of humanity, at least the way history is typically treated. In part this is because biographical information can be assembled more accurately and completely than historical information; and in part because the agents of authentic history are not so much human beings as peoples and armies, and the individuals who do crop up seem so far away, have so much surrounding them, such a great retinue, and in addition are wrapped in the stiff clothing of state or heavy and inflexible suits of armour, so that it is truly difficult to recognize human movement through it all. By contrast, a true description of the life of the individual within a narrow sphere will show all the forms and nuances of the way human beings act, the excellence, virtue, indeed the holiness of particular individuals, the perversity, misery, perfidy of most, the iniquity of many. In fact, from the only point of view we are considering here, namely the inner significance of what appears, it makes absolutely no difference whether the objects that action turns on are, viewed relatively, trivialities or matters of importance, farmyards or kingdoms: for in themselves, none of these things have any significance and they acquire it only through the fact that and in so far as they set the will into motion: a motive has significance only in relation to the will; on the other hand, the relations that, as a thing, it possesses to other similar things do not come into consideration at all. Just as a circle with a one-inch diameter and a circle with a diameter of 40 million miles will have exactly the same geometrical properties, so the events and the history of a village and those of a kingdom will be the same in their essentials; and we can study and come to know humanity in the one just as in the other. [. . .]

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^a*Dichtkunst.*

^b*scheinbar.*

^c*Erkenntniß.*

Now the poet can carry out his task of portraying the Idea of humanity in one of two ways: either what is portrayed is at the same time the portrayer (this is what happens in lyric poetry, in the song proper,^a where the poetry-writer^b vividly intuitively and describes only his own state); because of this, therefore, i.e. through its object, a certain subjectivity is essential to this genre; – or, on the other hand, what is being portrayed is wholly different from the portrayer, as in all the other genres, where the portrayer is concealed to a greater or lesser degree behind what is portrayed, even to the point of vanishing entirely. In the romance, the portrayer still expresses his own situation to some extent through the tone and attitude of the whole: because of this, although it is much more objective than the song, the romance still has some elements of subjectivity, but these become increasingly faint in the idyll, still more so in the novel, are almost entirely gone in the epic proper, and finally vanish without a trace in the drama, which is the most objective and most perfect genre of poetry in more than one respect, as well as the most difficult. The lyrical genre is for this reason the easiest, and if art otherwise belongs only to the rare and true genius, even someone who is not particularly distinguished can produce a lovely song when some strong, external source of inspiration,^c some burst of enthusiasm intensifies his mental powers: because all that is needed for this is a lively intuition of his own state in the moment of exhilaration. This is confirmed by the many isolated songs by otherwise unknown and random individuals, particularly the German folk-songs assembled in the superb collection *The Boy's Magic Horn*,^d and the equally innumerable love songs and other popular songs in all languages. The whole achievement of this poetic genre is to grasp the mood of the moment and embody it in a song. Still, the lyric poetry^e of true poets forms an image of the interior of humanity as a whole, and everything that millions of people past, present and future have felt and will feel (because the same situations keep recurring)

finds its proper expression in the lyric. Because these situations keep recurring, they are as permanent as humanity itself, and always evoke the same feelings; so the lyric products of true poets continue to ring true and retain their freshness and power over thousands of years. Now if, in general, the poet is the universal human being, then everything that has moved a human heart, whatever issues forth from human nature in any situation, whatever dwells or broods in the breast of man, – this is his theme and his material; and along with these, all the rest of nature. Thus the poet can sing of the sensual just as well as of the mystical, can be Anacreon or Angelus Silesius, can write tragedies or comedies, can present a sublime disposition or a common one, according to his mood and mission. This is why nobody can tell the poet that he should be noble or sublime, moral, pious, Christian, this or that, or even less reproach him for being this and not that. He is the mirror of humanity and brings what it feels and does^f to its own consciousness.

[. . .]

In the more objective types of literature,^h especially the novel, epic and drama, there are two ways in particular of achieving the goal, the revelation of the Idea of humanity: first, through the apt and profoundly conceived depiction of significant characters, and second, through the invention of significant situations in which these characters can develop themselves. Just as it is incumbent on chemists not only to give a clear and true presentation of the basic materials and their principal combinations, but also to expose them to the influence of reagents that show their distinctive qualities clearly and conspicuously – similarly, it is incumbent on the poet not only to present us truthfully and faithfully with significant characters, as nature itself does, but also to familiarize us with these characters by putting them into situations in which their distinctive qualities can completely display themselves and the characters can be shown clearly and in sharp relief; such situations are, accordingly, referred to as significant ones. In real life as in history, chance rarely introduces situations of this type, and they are isolated, lost and hidden in the

^aim eigentlichen Liede.

^bder Dichtende.

^cAnregung.

^dWunderhorn (the full title is *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*).

^ePoesie.

^fächter Dichter.

^gtreibt.

^hDichtungsarten.

mass of insignificant situations. The novel, the epic and the drama are distinguished from real life as much in the arrangement and selection of significant characters as in the fact that the situations they present are completely suffused with significance. Both however are effective only under the condition of the strictest truthfulness, and a lack of unity in the characters, contradictions of the characters among themselves or with human nature in general, as well as the impossibility of the events (or an improbability approaching impossibility), even in matters of secondary importance, are just as offensive in poetry as distorted figures, false perspectives and bad lighting are in painting. This is because in both cases we demand a true mirror of life, of humanity, of the world, only clarified by the presentation and lent significance by means of its arrangement. Since there is only one goal for all the arts, presentation of the Ideas, and the only essential distinction between the various arts is the level of the objectivation of the will at which the Idea to be presented is found, which in turn determines the material of the presentation, so too the most dissimilar arts can be elucidated through comparison with each other. Thus, for instance, in order to grasp fully the Ideas that express themselves in water, it is not enough to look at water in a quiet pond or evenly flowing stream; rather those Ideas are developed completely only when water appears in all those conditions and with all the obstacles that, working on it, bring about the full expression of all of its properties. This is why we find water beautiful when it plunges downwards, roars, foams, springs up into the air again, or turns into spray as it falls, or finally, forced by artificial means, rises upwards in a jet: and although it manifests itself differently in different conditions, it always states its character truthfully: it is just as natural for water to spray upwards as it is for it to reflect calmly; it is just as prepared for the one as for the other, as soon as the conditions emerge. Now what the artist who works with fountainry achieves with fluid matter is achieved by the architect with rigid matter, and again in the very same way by the epic or dramatic poet with the Idea of humanity. The development and clarification of the Idea that expresses itself in the objects of each art, of the will that objectifies itself on every level, is the common goal of all the arts. A human life, as it usually

shows itself in reality, is like water as it usually shows itself in ponds and rivers: but in epics, novels and tragedies, selected characters are transposed into circumstances that allow them to display all their distinctive features and reveal the depths of the human mind that become visible in significant and extraordinary actions. Thus literature objectifies the Idea of humanity, whose distinguishing characteristic is to present itself in highly individualized characters.

Tragedy^a should be viewed, and is in fact recognized, as the pinnacle of literature, both in relation to the grandeur of its effect and the difficulty of achieving it. It is of great significance for the whole of our discussion and also important to bear in mind that the goal of this highest of poetic achievements is the portrayal of the terrible aspect of life, that the unspeakable pain, the misery of humanity, the triumph of wickedness,^b the scornful domination of chance, and the hopeless fall of the righteous and the innocent are brought before us here: for here we find a significant intimation as to the nature^c of the world and of existence. What emerges horribly is the conflict of the will with itself, displaying itself most fully here, at the highest level of its objecthood. It becomes visible in human suffering, which is brought about in part through chance and error, which step forward as rulers of the world and through their treachery (which goes so far as to appear intentional) are personified as fate; and in part it is brought about by humanity itself, through the clashes between the strivings of individual wills, through the wickedness and perversity of the majority. It is one and the same will that lives and appears in them all, but whose appearances battle amongst themselves and tear themselves apart. The will emerges violently in this individual, more weakly in this other, it is brought to its senses and attenuated by the light of cognition more over here, less over there, until finally, in isolated cases, this cognition, clarified and intensified through suffering itself, reaches the point where it is no longer deceived by appearance, the veil of *māyā*; it sees through the form of appearance, the *principium individuationis*,^d and the

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^adas Trauerspiel.^bBosheit.^cBeschaffenheit.^dPrinciple of individuation.

egoism that rests on this principle slowly dies away, so that *motives* that had previously been so violent lose their power, and in their place, complete cognition of the essence of the world acts as a *tranquillizer* of the will and leads to resignation, the abandonment not only of life, but of the whole will to life. So in tragedy we see that, after a long struggle and much suffering, the noblest people eventually renounce forever the goals they had, up to that point, pursued so intensely, as well as renouncing all the pleasures of life, or even willingly and joyfully giving them up: thus Calderón's steadfast prince; thus Gretchen in *Faust*; thus Hamlet, whom Horatio would gladly follow, but who calls upon him to stay and breathe on painfully for a while longer in this harsh world, to cast light on Hamlet's fate and clear his memory; – thus the Maid of Orleans, the Bride of Messina:^a they all die, purified by suffering, i.e. after the will to live^b has already died out inside them; in Voltaire's *Mahomet* this is stated literally in the final words that the dying Palmira cries out to Mahomet: "The world is for tyrants: live!" – By contrast, the demand for so-called poetic justice rests on a complete failure to recognize the essence of tragedy and in fact the essence of the world. This demand appears in its full triteness and impertinence in the criticisms that Dr Samuel Johnson has offered of some of Shakespeare's plays, complaining with true naïvety about the thorough neglect of poetic justice; which is certainly the case: after all, what have the Ophelias, Desdemonas and Cordelias done wrong? – But only the trite, optimistic, Protestant-rationalist or actually Jewish world-view would demand poetic justice and find its own satisfaction in the satisfaction of this demand. The true sense of tragedy is the deeper insight that the hero does not atone for his particular sins, but for original sin instead, i.e. the guilt of existence itself.

Because the greatest offence of man,
Is that he was born^c

as Calderón says with perfect frankness.

I will allow myself only one remark concerning the detailed treatment of tragedy. The only thing essential to tragedy is the portrayal of a great misfortune. But the many different ways in which the poet can accomplish this can be organized into three specific categories.^d It can take place through extraordinary evil, an evil that reaches the limits of the possible and is attributable to the one character that is the author of the misfortune; examples of this type are: Richard III, Iago in *Othello*, Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Franz Moor, Euripides' Phaedra, Creon in *Antigone*, and the like. It can also take place through blind fate, i.e. chance and error: a true model for this type is Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* as well as the *Women of Trachis*, and in general most of the tragedies of the ancients belong here: modern examples include: *Romeo and Juliet*, Voltaire's *Tancred*, and *The Bride of Messina*. Finally, the misfortune can also be introduced simply by means of people's positioning with respect to each other, through their relationships; so that there is no need for a terrible mistake or unheard-of accident or even for a character whose evilness extends to the limits of human possibility; instead, morally ordinary characters in everyday circumstances are positioned with respect to each other in such a way that their situation forces them knowingly and clear-sightedly to cause each other the greatest harm without the injustice falling on one side or the other. This last type seems to me much preferable to the other two, because it shows us the greatest misfortune not as an exception, not as something brought about by rare circumstances or monstrous characters, but rather as something that develops effortlessly and spontaneously out of people's deeds and characters, almost as if it were essential, thereby bringing it terrifyingly close to us. And if in both the other categories of tragedy we catch sight of an appalling fate and horrific evil as powers that are indeed terrible but that threaten us only from a great distance so that we ourselves will probably escape them without being driven to renunciation, – then this last genre shows us the sort of powers that destroy life and happiness and that can at any moment make their way towards us as well, where the greatest suffering is brought about

^aThese last two are plays by Schiller.

^b*Wille zu leben*.

^c*Pues el delito mayor del hombre es haber nacido* | *La Vida es Sueño* (Life is a Dream, I, 2).

^d*Artbegriffe*.

by entanglements essentially the same as those assumed by our own fate, and through actions that we too might perhaps be capable of committing, so that we may not complain of injustice: then we shudder as we feel ourselves already in the middle of hell. But the execution of this final type of tragedy brings with it the greatest difficulties because it has to produce the greatest effect merely by positioning and distribution, with the least expenditure of means and the smallest number of causes of action:^a thus even some of the best tragedies evade this difficulty. A perfect specimen of this type of tragedy is nonetheless to be found in a work that in other respects is greatly surpassed by many others of the same great master: it is *Clavigo*.^b To a certain extent *Hamlet* belongs here, if you look only at his relation to Laertes and Ophelia; *Wallenstein*^c has this merit as well; *Faust* is entirely of this type, if you consider as the principal action only the events with Gretchen and her brother; likewise Corneille's *Cid*, except that this lacks a tragic end, which, by contrast, you find in the analogous relation of Max to Thecla.^d

§ 52

Now that we have considered all the fine arts with the universality proper to our point of view, beginning with fine architecture (whose goal as such is to make the objectivation of the will clear at the lowest level of its visibility, where it shows itself as the dull striving of mass, conforming to law but with no cognition, but nonetheless still revealing self-dichotomy and struggle, namely between gravity and rigidity) – and concluding our investigation with tragedy at the highest level of the objectivation of the will, and which puts that very schism before our eyes in fearful grandeur and clarity; – we find that one fine art still remained, and must remain excluded from our consideration since there was absolutely no suitable place for it in the systematic context of our presentation: and this is *music*. It stands completely apart from all the others. What we recognize in it is not an

imitation^e or repetition of some Idea of the essence of the world: nonetheless, it is such a great and magisterial art, it exercises so powerful an effect within us, is understood so deeply and entirely by us as a wholly universal language whose clarity exceeds even that of the intuitive world itself; – that we can certainly look to it for more than an ‘unconscious exercise in arithmetic in which the mind does not know that it is counting,’^f which is what Leibniz took it to be,^g although he was entirely correct to the extent that he considered only its immediate and external significance, its outer shell. But if it were nothing more, then the satisfaction that it affords would be similar to the feeling we have when some mathematical problem comes out right, and would not be that heartfelt joy with which we see the deepest recesses of our being^h given voice. Thus, from our perspective, focusing on the aesthetic effect, we must grant it a much more serious and profound significance, one that refers to the innermost essence of the world and our self, and in this respect the numerical relations into which it can be resolved are not the signified but, even in the first instance, the sign. By analogy with the rest of the arts, we can conclude that music must in some sense relate to the world as presentation to presented, as copy to original,^h since all of the other arts share this distinctive feature, and music has an effect on us that is, on the whole, similar to theirs, but stronger, quicker, more necessary and more unerring. Its imitative,ⁱ relation to the world must also be very intimate,^j infinitely true and strikingly apt, because it is instantaneously comprehensible to everyone and has a certain infallibility recognizable from the fact that its form can be reduced to completely determinate rules that can be expressed numerically, and from which it cannot deviate in the least without entirely ceasing to be music. – Nonetheless the point of comparison between music and the world, the respect in which the former acts as an imitation or repetition of the latter, is very deeply

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^a*Bewegungsursachen*.

^bBy Goethe.

^cBy Schiller.

^dCharacters in *Wallenstein*.

^e*Lebnitii epistole, collectio Kortholti* (Letters of Leibniz, edited by Christian Kortholt), letter 154.

^f*Nachbildung*.

^g*exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi*.

^h*Wesen*.

ⁱwie *Nachbild zum Vorbilde*.

^j*nachbildliche*.

^k*innige*.

hidden. In every age, people have played music without being able to give an account of it: content with an immediate understanding of music, people did without an abstract conceptualization of this immediate understanding.

By devoting my mind entirely to the impression made by the art of music^a in its many different forms, and then returning to reflection and to the train of thought expounded in the present work, an explanation came to me of the inner essence of music and its mimetic relation to the world, a relation that must be necessarily presupposed by analogy. This explanation is entirely sufficient for me as well as satisfactory for my investigation, and will be equally insightful to those who have followed me thus far and agreed with my view of the world; nonetheless, I recognize that the explanation is fundamentally incapable of proof, since it assumes and lays down a relationship between music as a representation and something that can fundamentally never be a representation; it claims to regard music as the copy of an original that cannot itself ever be directly presented. Here, therefore, at the conclusion of this Third Book, devoted primarily to the arts, I cannot do more than to present the explanation that I find personally satisfying of the marvellous musical art,^b and I must leave the acceptance or rejection of my view to the overall effect on readers of, on the one hand, music itself, as well as, on the other, the whole of the single thought that I have communicated in this text. Beyond that, in order for readers to be genuinely convinced by my explanation of the significance of music, I consider it necessary that they listen to music frequently and with sustained reflection; and in order to do so it is again necessary that they should already be very familiar with the whole of the thought I am presenting here.

The (Platonic) Ideas are the adequate objectivation of the will; the goal of all the other arts is to arouse cognition of these Ideas through the presentation of particular things (artworks themselves are always such things) – something that is possible only given a corresponding alteration in the subject of cognition. As a result, they all objectify the will only indirectly, namely by

means of the Ideas: and since our world is nothing other than the appearance of the Ideas in multiplicity as a result of those Ideas entering into the *principium individuationis* (the form of cognition possible for the individual as such); then, since it passes over the Ideas, music is also wholly independent of the appearing world, simply ignoring it, so that it could in a sense still exist even if there were no world at all, something that cannot be said of the other arts. In fact, music is an *unmediated*^c objectivation and copy^d of the entire will, just as the world itself is, just as in fact the Ideas themselves are, whose multiplied appearance constitutes the world of particular things. Therefore, unlike the other arts, music is in no way a copy of the Ideas; instead, it is a *copy of the will itself*, whose objecthood the Ideas are as well: this is precisely why the effect of music is so much more powerful and urgent than that of the other arts: the other arts speak only of shadows while music speaks of the essence. But since it is the same will that objectifies itself in the Ideas as much as in music (albeit completely differently in each of them) then there must be a parallelism between them even if there is absolutely no direct similarity, there must still be an analogy between music and the Ideas whose multiplied, incomplete appearance makes up the visible world. Evidence for this analogy will clarify these points better, since understanding here is hindered by the obscurity of its object.

In the lowest notes of harmony, in the ground bass, I recognize the lowest levels of the objectivation of the will, inorganic nature, the mass of the planet. All the higher notes, which are brisk, sprightly and die away more quickly, are known to originate from the secondary vibrations^e of the deep tonic note^f (they always resonate softly with this tonic note) and it is the law of harmony that a bass note may be accompanied only by those high notes that actually already sound with it on their own (its *sons harmoniques*^g) through these secondary vibrations. Now this is analogous to the fact that all the natural bodies and organizations

^c*unmittelbar.*

^d*Abbild.*

^e*Nebenschwingungen.*

^f*Grundton.*

^g*Harmonics.*

^a*Tonkunst.*

^b*Kunst der Töne.*

must be seen as arising from a stepwise development out of the planetary mass: this mass is both their support and their source: and this is the same relationship that the higher notes have to the ground bass. – There is a limit to the depth at which tones are still audible: this corresponds to the fact that matter is not perceptible in the absence of form and quality (i.e. without the expression of a force that cannot itself be further explained, precisely one in which an Idea expresses itself), and more generally to the fact that no matter can be entirely without will: thus, just as a certain pitch is inseparable from tone as such, so a certain grade of expression of the will is inseparable from matter. – For us, as a result, ground bass is to harmony what inorganic nature is to the world, the crudest mass on which everything rests and from which all things arise and develop. – Now, further, in all the ripienos that produce harmony between the bass and the leading voice that sings the melody, I recognize the entire sequence of levels^a of Ideas in which the will objectifies itself. Those closer to the bass are the lower of these levels, bodies that are still inorganic but that already express themselves in a variety of ways: to me, the higher voices represent the plant and animal kingdoms. – The particular intervals of the scales parallel the particular levels of the objectivation of the will, the particular natural species. Deviation from the arithmetical correctness of the intervals either through some sort of tempering^b or when it is produced by key selection, is analogous to the deviation of the individual from the type of the species: indeed, impure dissonances yielding no determinate interval can be compared to the monstrous hybrids^c between two species of animals or between humans and animals. – But these bass and ripieno voices that make up the *harmony* lack the coherent forward motion found only in the upper voice singing the *melody*; this is the only voice that moves quickly and lightly, in modulations and runs, while the harmonic voices all move more slowly and without any intrinsic coherence. The deep bass, representative of the crudest mass, moves most ponderously: it rises

and falls only in large intervals, in thirds, fourths, fifths, never by a *single* tone, unless it is a bass transposed by a double counterpoint. It is also physically essential for the deep bass to move slowly: a rapid run or trill here cannot even be imagined. The upper voices of the ripieno move more quickly, although still without any melodic coherence or significant forward movement, and this has a parallel in the animal kingdom. All ripienos voices proceed in a way that is at once disconnected but also conforms to law; and this is analogous to the fact that in the whole of the irrational world, from the crystal to the most perfect animal, no being has a genuinely coherent consciousness that would make its life into a meaningful whole, no creature has the experience of a succession of mental developments, no creature improves itself^d through education; instead everything stays the same all the time for them, as determined for their species by fixed law. – Finally, in *melody*, the high-singing, principal voice that guides the whole, moving forward with unhindered freedom^e so as to join everything from beginning to end seamlessly together into a *single*, meaningful thought, a principal voice presenting a whole, – in this I recognize the highest level of the objectivation of the will, the thoughtful/ living and striving of human beings. Only human beings, being endowed with reason, keep looking forwards and backwards over the course of their actual life as well as their countless possibilities, thereby achieving a life course that, in being thoughtful, is a coherent whole: – correspondingly, only *melody* is joined up from beginning to end in a way that is full both of purpose and significance. As such, it narrates the story of the will as it is illuminated by thoughtfulness, the will whose imprint in reality is the sequence of its deeds; but it says more, it tells the will's most secret story, it paints every emotion, every striving, every movement of the will, everything that reason collects under the broad and negative concept of feeling and cannot grasp any further with its abstractions. Thus music has always been described as the language of feeling and of passion, just as words are the language of reason: Plato

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^aStufenfolge.

^bTemperatur (this term, tempering, as in Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, describes the process of deviating from pure intervals).

^cMißgeburten.

^dsich vervollkommenet.

^emit ungebundener Willkür.

^fbesonnene.

308 already describes music as: 'the movement of melodies that imitates the emotions of the soul';^a *Laws*, VIII, and Aristotle too says: 'Why are rhythm and melody, which are only sounds, similar to states of soul?' *Problems*, ch. 19.^b

Now the essence of a human being consists in the fact that his will strives, is satisfied, and strives anew, and so on and on, and in fact his happiness and well-being are nothing more than the rapid progress of this transition from desire to satisfaction and from this to a new desire, since the absence of satisfaction is suffering and the absence of a new desire is empty longing, languor,^c boredom; correspondingly, the essence of the melody is a constant departure, deviation from the tonic^d in a thousand ways, not only to the harmonic intervals, to the third and dominant, but to every note, to the dissonant seventh and to the augmented intervals, always followed however by an eventual return to the tonic: in all these ways the melody expresses the many different forms of the striving of the will, but it always also expresses satisfaction by eventually regaining a harmonic interval and, even more, the tonic. The creation of melody, the discovery of all the deepest secrets of human willing and sensation in it is the work of the genius, whose activity, here more than anywhere else, is more obviously remote from any reflection or conscious intentionality, and could be termed inspiration. The concept is barren here, as it is everywhere else in art: the composer reveals the innermost essence of the world and expresses the deepest wisdom in a language that his reason does not understand, just as a magnetic somnambulist explains things that he has no idea about when awake. Thus, in a composer more than in any other artist, the human being and the artist are entirely separate and distinct. The poverty and limitations of the concept

are obvious even in our explanation of this marvelous art: nevertheless, I want to try to take our analogy further. – Just as a more rapid transition from desire to satisfaction and from satisfaction to a new desire comprise happiness and well-being, so brisk melodies without long deviations are cheerful; slow melodies that fall into painful dissonances and take many bars before they wind their way back to the tonic are sad, by analogy with delayed and hard-won satisfaction. Languor, delay in finding something new to excite the will, can be expressed in no way other than as a protracted tonic, whose effect is soon unbearable: very monotonous, inane^e melodies already come close to this. The short, easy phrases of swift dance music seem to speak only of common happiness that is easy to come by; by contrast, the *allegro maestoso* with its grand phrases, long passages and extended deviations^f describes a grander, nobler striving after, and eventual accomplishment of, a distant goal. The *adagio* speaks of the suffering of a great and noble striving that scorns all petty happiness. But what a wonderful effect there is with the *minor* and the *major*! How astonishing that the change of a semitone, the introduction of the minor third instead of the major, instantly and inevitably urges an anxious, awkward sensation on us from which we are just as instantaneously rescued by the major. An *adagio* in the minor achieves an expression of the highest pain and becomes a most deeply moving lament. Dance music in the minor seems to describe the absence of a petty happiness that we ought rather to disdain; it seems to speak of the achievement of a lower goal through toil and drudgery. – The inexhaustibility of the possible melodies corresponds to the inexhaustibility of nature in the variety of individuals, physiognomies and life histories. Modulation from one key into another, completely different one entirely abolishes any connection to what preceded it, and so is like death in so far as death brings the individual to an end; but the will that appeared in the individual lives on afterwards, just as it was alive before, appearing in other individuals whose consciousnesses nonetheless have no connection to that of the first.

Still, despite the evidence of all these analogies, we must never forget that music has only an indirect

^aἡ τῶν μελῶν κινήσις μεμιμημένη, ἐν τοῖς παθημασιν ὅταν ψυχὴ γιγνῆται (*melodiarum motus, animi affectus imitans*) [*Laws* VIII, 812c: though not an accurate quotation].

^bδιὰ τὶ οἱ ρυθμοὶ καὶ τὰ μέλη, φωνῆ οὐσα, ἡδῶσιν εἰσὶν; (*cur numeri musici et modi, qui voces sunt, moribus similes sese exhibent?*) [920b29 is a somewhat similar passage to Schopenhauer's suggested quotation. *Problems* is a work traditionally in the Aristotelian corpus, whose authorship has been seriously doubted].

^cLanguor in English, or Latin, in the original.

^dGrundton.

^enichtssagende.

^fAbwirrungen.

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relation to them, not a direct one, because it never expresses appearance but only the inner essence, the in-itself of all appearance, the will itself. Therefore it does not express this or that individual and particular joy, this or that sorrow or pain or horror or exaltation or cheerfulness or peace of mind, but rather joy, sorrow, pain, horror, exaltation, cheerfulness and peace of mind as such *in themselves*, abstractly,^a as it were, the essential in all these without anything superfluous, and thus also in the absence of any motives for them. Nevertheless, we understand them perfectly in this pared-down quintessence. This is why our imagination is so easily excited by them and tries to take that invisible and yet so vividly aroused spiritual world, a world that speaks to us directly, and to form it, to clothe it in flesh and bone and thus embody it in an analogous example. This is the origin of songs with words and ultimately of opera, – whose libretto, for this very reason, should never depart from this subordinate position to assume the principal role, making music into a mere means for its expression, which is a bad mistake and seriously wrongheaded. For music everywhere expresses only the quintessence of life and of the events taking place in it, never these themselves, and so distinctions within these do not always influence it. Precisely this universality, exclusive as it is to music, together with the most exact precision gives music its high value as the panacea for all our suffering. Thus if music ties itself too closely to words or tries to model itself on events, it is trying to speak a language that is not its own. Nobody has avoided this error as completely as *Rossini*: which is why his music speaks its *own* language so clearly and purely that it has no need of words at all and retains its full effect when performed on instruments alone.

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Given all we have said, we can view the appearing world (or nature) and music as two different expressions of the same thing; this thing itself is thus the only middle term of their analogy, and it must be cognized before we can have any insight into this analogy. Seen as the expression of the world, music is therefore a universal language to the highest degree, indeed it is to the universality of concepts almost what these are to particular things. But its universality is in no way the empty universality of abstraction; rather, it is of a

different sort altogether, and is united with thorough and clear-cut determinateness.^b In this respect it is comparable to numbers and geometric figures, which, as the universal forms of – and *a priori* applicable to – all possible objects of experience, are not for that matter abstract, but rather intuitive and thoroughly determinate. All possible endeavours, excitations and expressions of the will, all processes that take place within human beings and that reason throws into the broad and negative concept of feeling, can be expressed through the infinitely large number of possible melodies, but always in the universality of mere form and without matter, only ever according to the in-itself, not according to appearance, its innermost soul, as it were, without the body. From this inner relationship of music to the true essence of all things, we can also explain how it is that if an appropriate piece of music is played with some scene, action, event, surrounding, it seems to disclose to us its most secret sense, and acts as the clearest and most apt commentary on it; moreover, we can also explain that if someone surrenders himself completely to the impression made by a symphony, it is as if he sees all the possible events of life and the world passing before him: yet if he pauses and reflects on this,^c he cannot specify any point of similarity between the play of notes^d and the things he has in mind. For music is, as we have said, different from all other arts in that it is not a copy^e of appearance, or better, of the adequate objecthood of the will, but is instead a direct copy of the will itself, and thus presents what is metaphysical in all that is physical in the world, the thing in itself for all appearance. We could therefore just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will: this also explains why music causes every painting, and in fact every scene from real life and the world, suddenly to emerge in a state of heightened significance; and of course the more so the greater the analogy there is between the melody and the inner spirit of the given appearance. This is why we can set a poem to music as a song, or a graphic^f presentation to music as a pantomime, or

^b*Bestimmtheit.*

^c*sich besinnt.*

^d*Tonspiel.*

^e*Abbild.*

^f*anschauliche.*

^a*in abstracto.*

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the two together to music as an opera. Such individual images of human life, set to the universal language of music, are never connected to music or correspond to it with complete necessity; rather they are to music what an arbitrary example is to a universal concept: they present in the determinateness of reality what music expresses in the universality of mere form. This is because melodies are to a certain extent like universal concepts, being abstractions from reality.^a Reality, and hence the world of specific^b things, provides what is intuitive, what is particular and individual, the specific case both for the universality of concepts as well as for the universality of melodies, although these two universalities are opposed in a certain respect: concepts contain simply the very first forms^c abstracted from intuition, the outer shells that have been stripped off things, as it were, and are thus wholly authentic *abstracta*; music on the other hand provides the innermost kernel, prior to all form^d – the heart of things. This relationship can be expressed extremely well in the language of the Scholastics, where it is said that concepts are the *universalia post rem*, while music gives the *universalia ante rem*, and reality gives *universalia in re*.^e The universal sense of a melody accompanying one literary text^f could correspond to the same degree to other, equally arbitrarily selected examples of the universality expressed in it: this is why the same composition is suitable for many verses, and hence also *vaudeville*. But the very possibility of a relationship between a composition and a graphic^g presentation rests, as we have said, on the fact that both are expressions of the same inner essence of the world, only quite different ones. Now when such a relationship is really at hand in a particular case, when the composer knew how to express the stirrings of the will (which constitutes the kernel of an event) in the universal language of music, then the melody of the song, the music of the opera is expressive. But the analogy

^a*Wirklichkeit.*

^b*einzelne.*

^c*Formen.*

^d*Gestaltung.*

^eUniversals after the fact, universals before the fact, universals in the fact.

^f*Dichtung.*

^g*anschaulichen.*

the composer has discovered between the two must proceed from direct cognition of the essence of the world, unbeknownst to his reason; it must not be an imitation^h mediated through concepts with conscious intentionality: otherwise music would not express the inner essence, the will itself, but would instead give only an unsatisfactory imitation of the will's appearance; this is what happens in all authentically imitativeⁱ music, such as Haydn's *The Seasons* as well as his *Creation* in many places, where appearances of the intuitive world are imitated^j directly; it is the same with all battle pieces, something that is to be rejected entirely.

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The inexpressible intimacy^k of all music, which allows it to pass before us like a paradise that is so utterly familiar and yet eternally foreign, so entirely comprehensible and yet so inexplicable, rests on the fact that it renders all the impulses^l of our innermost essence but without any reality and removed from their pain. Similarly, its essential seriousness, which completely excludes the ridiculous from its own, immediate vicinity, can be explained by the fact that its object is not representation (it is only in relation to this that deception and ridiculousness are possible) – but rather, its object is directly the will, which is in its essence the most serious thing of all, as that on which everything depends. – Even repetition signs, including *da capo*, attest to the richness of content and meaningfulness of the language of music; these would be intolerable in works written in the language of words, and yet these signs are entirely to the point and pleasing in music, because in order to grasp it fully, we must listen to it twice.

Throughout this discussion of music, I have tried to make clear that music uses a highly universal language to express the inner essence, the in-itself of the world (which we think through the concept of will, after its clearest expression) and does so in a distinctive^m material, namely pure tones, and with the greatest determinateness and truth; moreover, in my view and according to my

^h*Nachahmung.*

ⁱ*nachbildende.*

^j*nachgeahmt.*

^k*Innige.*

^l*Regungen.*

^m*einartig.*

endeavours, philosophy is nothing other than a complete and correct repetition and expression of the essence of the world in very general concepts, since only through such concepts is it possible to survey that whole essence in a way that is both universally adequate and applicable; as a result, anyone who has followed me and entered into my way of thinking will not think it so very paradoxical when I say that if we succeed in giving a perfectly correct, complete and detailed explanation of music, which is to say a thorough repetition, in concepts, of what it expresses, this would at the same time be a satisfactory repetition and explanation of the world in concepts, or something wholly in agreement with it, and thus would be the true philosophy; accordingly, we could parody that saying of Leibniz quoted above (which is quite right from an inferior perspective) in the sense of our superior insight into music as follows: 'Music is an unconscious exercise in metaphysics, in which the mind does not know that it is philosophizing.'^a Because *scire*, to know, always means to have put into abstract concepts. But further and apart from its aesthetic or inner significance but considered merely externally and purely empirically music is, thanks to the abundantly confirmed truth of Leibniz's saying, nothing other than the means for grasping (immediately and *in concreto*) larger numbers and more orderly numerical ratios, all of which we would otherwise be able to cognize only indirectly, by grasping them in concepts. So, by uniting these two very different and yet correct views of music we can create for ourselves the idea of the possibility of a philosophy of numbers, like that of Pythagoras or the Chinese in the *I Ching*, and then interpret in this sense the Pythagorean saying quoted by Sextus Empiricus (*Against the Mathematicians*,^b Book VII), the saying that reads: 'with respect to numbers, all things are similar'.^c And finally, if we bring this view to bear on our interpretation of harmony and melody given above, we will find that a mere moral philosophy without an explanation of nature, such as Socrates tried to introduce, is entirely analogous

to a melody without harmony, which is all that Rousseau wanted to have, and that conversely a mere physics and metaphysics without an ethics would correspond to a mere harmony without melody. – If I may be permitted, I will add to these informal remarks a few more observations concerning the analogy between music and the appearing world. In the previous Book we found that the highest level of the objectivation of the will, the human being, cannot appear alone and isolated, but presupposes the levels beneath him and these always presuppose still lower levels: likewise music which, like the world, immediately objectifies the will, is perfect^d only in complete^e harmony. In order to complete its impression, the high, leading voice of melody needs the accompaniment of all the other voices down to the deepest bass, which is to be seen as the origin of them all: melody intervenes as an integral component of harmony, and vice versa: and just as it is only in the full-voiced whole that music expresses what it aims to express, so, the one, extra-temporal will finds its complete objectivation only in the complete unification of all the levels, which reveal its essence in countless grades of ascending clarity. – The following analogy is also very remarkable. In the previous Book we saw that, notwithstanding the mutual adaptation of all the appearances of the will to each other as species (an adaptation that occasions a teleological perspective on them), there nevertheless remains a conflict between those appearances as individuals; this conflict cannot be abolished, it is visible on all the levels of appearances, and it makes the world into a standing battleground of all those appearances of one and the same will, rendering visible its inner self-contradiction. There is something in music that corresponds even to this. A completely pure harmonic system of notes is both physically as well as arithmetically impossible. The very numbers through which notes are expressed have insoluble irrationalities: we cannot even compute a scale within which each fifth would relate to the tonic as 2 to 3, each major third as 4 to 5, each minor third as 5 to 6, etc. This is because when the notes are related correctly to the tonic, they are no longer related correctly to

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^a*Musica est exercitium metaphysices occultum nescientis se philosophari animi.*

^b*Adv[ersus] Math[ematicos].*

^cτῷ ἀριθμῷ δε τὰ παντ' ἐπεικεν (*numero cuncta assimilantur*).

^d*vollkommen.*

^e*vollständig.*

each other, since for instance the fifth would have to be the minor third to the third, etc.: the notes of the scale are like actors who sometimes have to play one role and sometimes another. Thus, completely correct music cannot even be conceived, much less performed; and this is why every possible piece of music deviates from complete purity: the best it can do is to hide its essential dissonances by distributing them among all the notes, i.e. through tempering. Just look at Chladni's *Acoustics*, § 30, and his *Short Overview of the Theory of Sounds and Tones*,^a p. 12.

315 I could add something more concerning the way music is perceived, namely entirely and only in and through time, completely excluding space, and without being at all influenced by any cognition of causality (or therefore by the understanding), because notes make their aesthetic impression already as an effect; we do not have to refer them back to a cause, as we must with intuition. – But I do not want to prolong these observations further, since I have perhaps already treated some of these topics at somewhat too great a length in this Third Book, or become too involved in details. But my purpose required this, and it will be less subject to disapproval if one bears in mind the importance and high value of art (which are seldom sufficiently recognized), and considers that if, as we have said, the whole visible world is only the objectivation, the mirror of the will, accompanying it for its self-cognition and indeed, as we will soon see, for the possibility of its redemption; and if, at the same time, the world as representation, viewed on its own by breaking it free from the will, letting it be the only thing occupying one's consciousness, is the most joyful and the only innocent side of life; – we have to consider art as the greater intensification,^b the more complete development of all this, since it essentially accomplishes the same thing as the visible world itself, only more concentratedly, with deliberateness and clarity of mind,^c and it therefore may be called the blossom of life in the full sense of the term. If the whole world as repre-

sentation is only the visibility of the will, then art is the clarification of this visibility, the *camera obscura* that shows objects with greater purity and allows them to be surveyed and summarized more readily, the play within a play, *Hamlet's* stage upon the stage.

The pleasure of all beautiful things, the consolation that art affords, the enthusiasm that allows the artist to forget the difficulties of life, this one advantage the genius possesses over other people and the only thing that compensates him for his suffering (which is increased in proportion to his clarity of consciousness) and also for his desolate solitude among a race so different from him, – all this is due to the fact that, as we will continue to show, the in-itself of life, the will, existence itself, is a constant suffering, partly miserable, partly horrible; on the other hand, the same thing as representation alone, purely intuited, or repeated in art, free from pain, affords a meaningful spectacle.^d This aspect of the world (which can be cognized purely) and its repetition in some art or another is the artist's element. He is riveted by his observations of the spectacle of the will's objecti- 316 vation: he comes to a stop with it, does not tire of observing it and repeating it as a presentation, and in so doing himself bears the cost of the performance of this spectacle, i.e. he is himself the will that has thus objectified itself and remains in a state of constant suffering. For him that pure, true and profound cognition of the essence of the world becomes a goal in itself: he comes to a stop there. Hence, this cognition does not become a tranquillizer of the will for him, as we will see in the next Book with the saints who have achieved resignation; for him, it redeems him from life, not forever but rather only momentarily, and it is not yet his way out of life, but only an occasional source of comfort within life itself, until this intensifies his powers to the point where he finally grows tired of the game and seizes upon serious things. We can think of Raphael's St Cecilia as a symbol of this transition. And now, in the following Book, we will turn to serious things as well.

^aAkustik ... Kurze Uebersicht der Schall-und Klanglehre.

^bals die höhere Steigerung.

^cmit Absicht und Besonnenheit.

^dSchauspiel.

The Beautiful in Music

Eduard Hanslick

Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904) was an influential Austrian music critic, who defended the self-sufficiency of music.

Has Music any subject? This has been a burning question ever since people began to reflect upon music. It has been answered both in the affirmative and in the negative. Many prominent men, almost exclusively *philosophers*, among whom we may mention Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Herbart, Kahlert, &c., hold that music has no subject. The numerous physiologists who endorse this view include such eminent thinkers as Lotze and Helmholtz, whose opinions, strengthened as they are by musical knowledge, carry great weight and authority. Those who contend that music *has a subject* are numerically far stronger: among them are the trained *musicians* of the literary profession, and their convictions are shared by the bulk of the public.

It may seem almost a matter for surprise that just those who are familiar with the technical side of music should be unwilling to concede the untenableness of a doctrine which is at variance with those very technical principles, and which thinkers on abstract subjects might perhaps be pardoned for propounding. The reason is, that many of these musical authors are more anxious to save the so-called honour of their art than to ascertain the truth. They attack the doctrine that music has no subject, not as one opinion against

another, but as heresy against dogma. The contrary view appears to them in the light of a degrading error and a form of crude and heinous materialism. “What! the art that charms and elevates us; to which so many noble minds have devoted a whole lifetime; which is the vehicle of the most sublime thoughts; *that* art to be cursed with unmeaningness, to be mere food for the senses, mere empty sound!” Hackneyed exclamations of this description which, though made up of several disconnected propositions, are generally uttered in one breath, neither prove nor disprove anything. The question is not a point of honour, not a party-badge, but simply the discovery of truth; and in order to attain this object, it is of the first importance to be clear regarding the points which are under debate.

It is the indiscriminate use of the terms, *contents*, *subject*, *matter*, which has been, and still is, responsible for all this ambiguity; the same meaning being expressed by different terms, or the same term associated with different meanings. “*Contents*,” in the true and original sense, is that which a thing *contains*, what it holds within. The *notes* of which a piece of music is composed, and which are the parts that go to make up the whole, are the contents in this sense. The circumstance that nobody will accept this definition as a satisfactory solution, but that it is dismissed as a truism, is due to the word “contents” (subject) being usually confounded with the word “object.”

An enquiry into the "contents" of musical compositions raises in such people's minds the conception of an "*object*" (subject-matter; topic), which latter, being the idea, the ideal element, they represent to themselves as almost antithetical to the "material part," the musical notes. Music has, indeed, no contents as thus understood; no *subject* in the sense that the subject to be treated is something extraneous to the musical notes. Kahlert is right in emphatically maintaining that music, unlike painting, admits of no "description in words" (Aesth. 380), though his subsequent assumption that a description in words may, at times, "compensate for the want of aesthetic enjoyment," is false. It may be the means, however, of clearly perceiving the real bearing of the question. The query "what" is the subject of the music, must necessarily be answerable in words, if music really has a "*subject*," because an "indefinite subject" upon which everyone puts a different construction, which can only be felt and not translated into words, is not a subject as we have defined it.

Music consists of successions and forms of sound, and these alone constitute the subject. They again remind us of architecture and dancing which likewise aim at beauty in form and motion, and are also devoid of a definite subject. Now, whatever be the effect of a piece of music on the individual mind, and howsoever it be interpreted, it has no *subject* beyond the combinations of notes we hear, for music does not only speak *by means of sounds*, it speaks nothing but *sound*.

Krüger – the opponent of Hegel and Kahlert – who is probably the most learned advocate of the doctrine that music has a "subject" – contends that this art presents but a different side of the subject which other arts, such as painting, represent. "All plastic figures," he says (Beiträge, 131), "are in a state of quiescence; they do not exhibit present, but past action, or the state of things at a given moment. The painting, therefore, does not show Apollo vanquishing, but it represents the victor, the furious warrior," &c. Music, on the other hand, "supplies to those plastic and quiescent forms the motive force, the active principle, the inner waves of motion; and whereas in the former instance we knew the true, but inert subject, to be anger, love, &c., we here know the true and active subject to be loving, rushing, heaving, storming, fuming." The latter portion is only partly true, for though music may

be said to "rush, heave, and storm," it can neither "love" nor be "angry." These sentiments we ourselves import into the music, and we must here refer our readers to the second chapter of this book. Krüger then proceeds to compare the definiteness of the *painter's subject* with the *musical subject*, and remarks: "The *painter* represents Orestes, pursued by the Furies: his outward appearance, his eyes, mouth, forehead, and posture, give us the impression of flight, gloom, and despair; at his heels the spirits of divine vengeance, whose imperious and sublimely terrible commands he cannot evade, but who likewise present unchanging outlines, features, and attitudes. The *composer* does not exhibit fleeing Orestes in fixed lines, but from a point of view from which the painter cannot portray him: he puts into his music the tremor and shuddering of his soul, his inmost feelings at war, urging his flight," &c. This, in our opinion, is entirely false; the composer is unable to represent Orestes either in one way or another; in fact, *he cannot represent him at all*.

The objection that sculpture and painting are also unable to represent to us a given historical personage, and that we could not know the figure to be *this very* individual, but for our previous knowledge of certain historical facts, does not hold good. True, the figure does not proclaim itself to be Orestes; the man who has gone through such or such experiences, and whose existence is bound up with certain biographic incidents; none but the *poet* can represent that, since he alone can narrate the events; but the painting "Orestes" unequivocally shows us a youth with noble features, in Greek attire, his looks and attitude betokening fear and mental anguish; and it shows us this youth pursued and tormented by the awe-inspiring goddesses of vengeance. All this is clear and indubitable; a visible narrative – no matter whether the youth be called Orestes or otherwise. Only the antecedent causes – namely, that the youth has committed matricide, &c., cannot be expressed. Now, what can music give us in point of definiteness as a counterpart to the visible subject of the painter – apart from the historical element? Chords of a diminished seventh, themes in minor keys, a rolling bass, &c. – musical forms, in brief, which might signify a woman just as well as a youth; one pursued by myrmidons instead of furies; somebody tortured by jealousy or by bodily pain; one bent on revenge – in short,

anything we can think of, if we must needs imagine a subject for the composition.

It seems almost superfluous to expressly recall the proposition, already established by us, that whenever the subject and the descriptive power of music are under debate, *instrumental music* alone can be taken into account. Nobody is likely to disregard this so far as to instance Orestes in Gluck's "Iphigenia," for this "Orestes" is not the *composer's* creation. The words of the poet, the appearance and gestures of the actor, the costume and the painter's decorations produce the complete Orestes. The composer's contribution – the melody – is possibly the most *beautiful* part of all, but it happens to be just that factor which has nothing whatever to do with the real Orestes.

Lessing has shown with admirable perspicuity what the poet and what the sculptor or painter may make of the story of Laocoon. The poet by the aid of speech gives us the historical, individually-defined Laocoon; the painter and sculptor shows us the terrible serpents, crushing in their coils an old man and two boys (of determinate age and appearance, dressed after a particular fashion, &c.), who by their looks, attitudes, and gestures express the agonies of approaching death. Of the *composer* Lessing says nothing, and this was only to be expected, since there is nothing in "Laocoon" which could be turned into music.

We have already alluded to the intimate connection between the question of *subject* in musical compositions and the relation of music to the *beauties of Nature*. The composer looks in vain for models such as those which render the subjects of other art-products both definite and recognisable, and an art for which Nature can provide no aesthetic model must, properly speaking, be incorporeal. A prototype of its mode of manifestation is nowhere to be met with, and it can, therefore, not be included in the range of living experiences. It does not reproduce an already known and classified subject, and for this reason it has no subject that can be taken hold of by the intellect, as the latter can be exercised only on definite conceptions.

The term *subject* (substance) can, properly speaking, be applied to an art-product only, if we regard it as the correlative of *form*. The terms "form" and "substance" supplement each other, and one cannot be thought of except in relation to the other. Wherever the "form" appears men-

tally inseparable from the "substance," there can be no question of an independent "substance" (subject). Now, in music, substance and form, the subject and its working out, the image and the realised conception are mysteriously blended in one undecomposable whole. This complete fusion of substance and form is exclusively characteristic of music, and presents a sharp contrast to poetry, painting, and sculpture, inasmuch as these arts are capable of representing the same idea and the same event in different forms. The story of William Tell supplied to Florian the subject for a historical novel, to Schiller the subject for a play, while Goethe began to treat it as an epic poem. The substance is everywhere the same, equally resolvable into prose, and capable of being narrated; always clearly recognisable, and yet the form differs in each case. Aphrodite emerging from the sea is the subject of innumerable paintings and statues, the various forms of which it is, nevertheless, impossible to confuse. In music, no distinction can be made between substance and form, as it has no form independently of the substance. Let us look at this more closely.

In all compositions the independent, aesthetically undecomposable subject of a musical conception is the *theme*, and by the theme, the musical microcosm, we should always be able to test the alleged subject underlying the music as such. Let us examine the leading theme of some composition, say that of Beethoven's Symphony in B flat major. What is its subject (substance)? What its form? Where does the latter commence and the former end? That its subject does not consist of a determinate feeling, we think we have conclusively proved, and this truth becomes only the more evident when tested by this or by any other concrete example. What then is to be called its *subject*? The groups of sounds? Undoubtedly; but they have a form already. And what is the *form*? The groups of sounds again; but here they are a *replete* form. Every practical attempt at resolving a theme into subject and form ends in arbitrariness and contradiction. Take, for instance, a theme repeated by another instrument or in the higher octave. Is the subject changed thereby or the form? If, as is generally the case, the latter is said to be changed, then all that remains as the *subject* of the theme would simply be the series of intervals, the skeleton frame for the musical notation as the score

presents them to the eye. But this is not *musical* definiteness, it is an abstract notion. It may be likened to a pavilion with stained window panes, through which the same environment appears, now red, now blue, and now yellow. The environment itself changes neither in *substance* nor in *form*, but merely in *colour*. This property of exhibiting the same forms in countless hues, from the most glaring contrasts down to the finest distinction of shade, is quite peculiar to music and is one of the most fertile and powerful causes of its effectiveness.

A theme originally composed for the piano and subsequently arranged for the orchestra acquires thereby a *new form* but not a *form for the first time*, the formal element being part and parcel of the primary conception. The assertion that a theme by the process of instrumentation changes its subject while retaining its form is even less tenable, as such a theory involves still greater contradictions, the listener being obliged to affirm, that though he recognises it to be the same subject "it somehow sounds like a different one."

It is true that in looking at a composition in the aggregate and more particularly at musical works of great length, we are in the habit of speaking of form and subject; in such a case, however, these terms are not understood in their primitive and logical sense, but in a specifically *musical* one. What we call the "form" of a Symphony, an Overture, a Sonata, an Aria, a Chorus, &c., is the architectonic combination of the units and groups of units of which a composition is made up; or more definitely speaking, the symmetry of their successions, their contrasts, repetitions, and general working out. But thus understood the subject is identical with the *themes* with which this architectonic structure is built up. Subject is here, therefore, no longer construed in the sense of an "object," but as the subject in a purely musical sense. The words "sub-stance" and "form" in respect of entire compositions are used in an aesthetic, and not in a strictly logical sense. If we wish to apply them to music in the latter sense, we must do so, not in relation to the composition in the aggregate, as a whole consisting of parts, but in relation to its ultimate and aesthetically undecomposable idea. This ultimate idea is the *theme* or *themes*, and in the latter substance and form are indis-

solubly connected. We cannot acquaint anybody with the "subject" of a theme, *except by playing it*. The subject of a composition can, therefore, not be understood as an object derived from an external source, but as something intrinsically musical; in other words, as the concrete group of sounds in a piece of music. Now, as a composition must comply with the formal laws of beauty, it cannot run on arbitrarily and at random, but must develop gradually with intelligible and organic definiteness, as buds develop into rich blossoms.

Here we have the *principal theme*; the true topic or subject of the entire composition. Everything it contains, though originated by the unfettered imagination, is nevertheless the natural outcome and effect of the theme which determines and forms, regulates and pervades its every part. We may compare it to a self-evident truth which we accept for a moment as satisfactory, but which our mind would fain see tested and developed, and in the musical working out this development takes place analogously to the logical train of reasoning in an argument. The theme, not unlike the chief hero in a novel, is brought by the composer into the most varied states and surrounding conditions, and is made to pass through ever-changing phases and moods – everything, no matter what contrasts it may present, is conceived and formed in relation to the theme.

The epithet *without a subject*, might possibly be applied to the freest form of extemporising, during which the performer indulges in chords, arpeggios, and rosalias, by way of a rest, rather than as a creative effort, and which does not end in the production of a definite and connected whole. Such extempore playing has no individuality of its own, by which one might recognise or distinguish it, and it would be quite correct to say that it has no subject (in the wider sense of the term), because it has no theme.

Thus the theme or the themes are the real subject of a piece of music.

In aesthetic and critical reviews far too little importance is attached to the *leading theme* of a composition; it alone reveals at once the mind which conceived the work. Every musician, on hearing the first few opening bars of Beethoven's Overture to "Leonore" or Mendelssohn's Overture to "The Hebrides," though he may be totally unaware of the subsequent development of the

theme, must recognise at once the treasure that lies before him; whereas the music of a theme from Donizetti's "Fausta" Overture or Verdi's Overture to "Louisa Miller" will, without the need of further examination, convince us that the music is fit only for low music halls. German theorists and executants prize the musical working-out far more than the inherent merits of the theme. But whatever is not contained in the theme (be it overtly or in disguise) is incapable of organic growth, and if the present time is barren of orchestral works of the Beethoven type it is, perhaps, due not so much to an imperfect knowledge of the working out, as to the want of symphonic power and fertility of the *themes*.

On enquiring into the *subject* of music we should, above all, beware of using the term "subject" in a eulogistic sense. From the fact that music has no extrinsic subject (object) it does not follow that it is without any *intrinsic merit*. It is clear that those who, with the zeal of partisanship, contend that music has a "subject," really mean "intellectual merit." We can only ask our readers to revert to our remarks in the third chapter of this book. Music is to be played, but it is not to be played with. Thoughts and feelings pervade with vital energy the musical organism, the embodiment of beauty and symmetry, and though they are not identical with the *organism itself* nor yet *visible*, they are, as it were, its breath of life. The composer *thinks* and *works*; but he thinks and works in *sound*, away from the realities of the external world. We deliberately repeat this commonplace, for even those who admit it in principle, deny and violate it when carried to its logical conclusions. They conceive the act of composing as a translation into sound of a given subject, whereas the sounds themselves are the untranslatable and original tongue. If the composer is obliged to think in sounds, it follows as a matter of course that music has no subject external to itself, for of a subject in this sense we ought to be able to think in *words*.

Though, when examining into the *subject* of music, we rigorously excluded compositions written for given sets of words as being inconsistent with the conception of music pure and simple, yet the masterpieces of vocal music are indispensable for the formation of an accurate judgment respecting the *intrinsic worth* of music. From the simple song to the complex opera and

the time-honoured practice of using music for the celebration of religious services, music has never ceased to accompany the most tender and profound affections of the human mind and has thus been the indirect means of glorifying them.

Apart from the existence of an *intrinsic merit*, there is a second corollary which we wish to emphasize. Though music possesses beauty of form without any extrinsic subject, this does not deprive it of the quality of *individuality*. The act of inventing a certain theme, and the mode of working it out, are always so unique and specific as to defy their inclusion in a wider generality. These processes are distinctly and unequivocally *individual* in nature. A theme of Mozart or Beethoven rests on as firm and independent a foundation as a poem by Goethe, an epigram by Lessing, a statue by Thorwaldsen, or a painting by Overbeck. The independent musical thoughts (themes) possess the identity of a quotation and the distinctness of a painting; they are individual, personal, eternal.

Unable, as we were, to endorse Hegel's opinion respecting the want of intellectual merit in music, it seems to us a still more glaring error on his part to assert that the sole function of music is the expressing of an "inner non-individuality." Even from Hegel's musical point of view, which, while overlooking the inherently form-giving and objective activity of the composer, conceives music as the free manifestation of purely *subjective states*, its want of individuality follows by no means, since the subjectively-producing mind is essentially individual.

How the individuality shows itself in the choice and working out of the various musical elements, we have already pointed out in the third chapter. The *stigma* that music has no subject is, therefore, quite unmerited. Music has a subject – *i.e.*, a musical subject, which is no less a vital spark of the divine fire than the beautiful of any other art. Yet, only by steadfastly denying the existence of any other "subject" in music, is it possible to save its "true subject." The indefinite emotions which at best underlie the other kind of subject, do not explain its spiritual force. The latter can only be attributed to the definite beauty of musical form, as the result of the untrammelled working of the human mind on material susceptible of intellectual manipulation.

The Birth of Tragedy

Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was an influential German philosopher who explored the sources of artistic creation.

I

We shall have gained much for the science of aesthetics, once we perceive not merely by logical inference, but with the immediate certainty of vision, that the continuous development of art is bound up with the *Apollinian* and *Dionysian* duality – just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations. The terms Dionysian and Apollinian we borrow from the Greeks, who disclose to the discerning mind the profound mysteries of their view of art, not, to be sure, in concepts, but in the intensely clear figures of their gods. Through Apollo and Dionysus, the two art deities of the Greeks, we come to recognize that in the Greek world there existed a tremendous opposition, in origin and aims, between the Apollinian art of sculpture, and the nonimagistic, Dionysian art of music. These two different tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births, which perpetuate an antagonism, only superficially recon-

ciled by the common term “art”; till eventually, by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic “will,” they appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling ultimately generate an equally Dionysian and Apollinian form of art – Attic tragedy.

In order to grasp these two tendencies, let us first conceive of them as the separate art words of *dreams* and *intoxication*. These physiological phenomena present a contrast analogous to that existing between the Apollinian and the Dionysian. It was in dreams, says Lucretius, that the glorious divine figures first appeared to the souls of men; in dreams the great shaper beheld the splendid bodies of superhuman beings; and the Hellenic poet, if questioned about the mysteries of poetic inspiration, would likewise have suggested dreams and he might have given an explanation like that of Hans Sachs in the *Meistersinger*:

The poet’s task is this, my friend,
to read his dreams and comprehend.
The truest human fancy seems
to be revealed to us in dreams:
all poems and versification
are but true dreams’ interpretation.

The beautiful illusion of the dream worlds, in the creation of which every man is truly an artist, is the prerequisite of all plastic art, and, as we shall

see, of an important part of poetry also. In our dreams we delight in the immediate understanding of figures; all forms speak to us; there is nothing unimportant or superfluous. But even when this dream reality is most intense, we still have, glimmering through it, the sensation that it is *mere appearance*: at least this my experience, and for its frequency – indeed, normality – I could adduce many proofs, including the saying of the poets. Philosophical men even have a presentiment that the reality in which we live and have our being is also mere appearance, and that another, quite different reality lies beneath it. Schopenhauer actually indicates as the criterion of philosophical ability the occasional ability to view men and things as mere phantoms or dream images. Thus the aesthetically sensitive man stands in the same relation to the reality of dreams as the philosopher does to the reality of existence; he is a close and willing observer, for these images afford him an interpretation of life, and by reflecting on these processes he trains himself for life. It is not only the agreeable and friendly images that he experiences as something universally intelligible: the serious, the troubled, the sad, the gloomy, the sudden restraints, the tricks of accident, anxious expectations, in short, the whole divine comedy of life, including the inferno, also pass before him, not like mere shadows on a wall – for he lives and suffers with these scenes – and yet not without that fleeting sensation of illusion. And perhaps many will, like myself, recall how amid the dangers and terrors of dreams they have occasionally said to themselves in self-encouragement, and not without success: “It is a dream! I will dream on!” I have likewise heard of people who were able to continue one and the same dream for three and even more successive nights – facts which indicate clearly how our innermost being, our common ground, experiences dreams with profound delight and a joyous necessity.

This joyous necessity of the dream experience has been embodied by the Greeks in their Apollo: Apollo, the god of all plastic energies, is at the same time the soothsaying god. He, who (as the etymology of the name indicates) is the “shining one,” the deity of light, is also ruler over the beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy. The higher truth, the perfection of these states in contrast to the incompletely intelligible everyday world, this deep consciousness of nature, healing

and helping in sleep and dreams, is at the same time the symbolical analogue of the soothsaying faculty and of the arts generally, which make life possible and worth living. But we must also include in our image of Apollo that delicate boundary which the dream image must not overstep lest it have a pathological effect (in which case mere appearance would deceive us as if it were crude reality). We must keep in mind that measured restraint, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that calm of the sculptor god. His eye must be “sunlike,” as befits his origin; even when it is angry and distempered it is still hallowed by beautiful illusion. And so, in one sense, we might apply to Apollo the words of Schopenhauer when he speaks of the man wrapped in the veil of *māyā* (*Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, I, p. 416): “Just as in a stormy sea that, unbounded in all directions, raises and drops mountainous waves, howling, a sailor sits in a boat and trusts in his frail bark: so in the midst of a world of torments the individual human being sits quietly, supported by and trusting in the *principium individuationis*.” In fact, we might say of Apollo that in him the unshaken faith in this *principium* and the calm repose of the man wrapped up in it receive their most sublime expression; and we might call Apollo himself the glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis*, through whose gestures and eyes all the joy and wisdom of “illusion,” together with its beauty, speak to us.

In the same work Schopenhauer has depicted for us the tremendous *terror* which seizes man when he is suddenly dumbfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena because the principle of sufficient reason, in some one of its manifestations, seems to suffer an exception. If we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at this collapse of the *principium individuationis*, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication. Either under the influence of the narcotic draught, of which the songs of all primitive men and peoples speak, or with the potent coming of spring that penetrates all nature with joy, these Dionysian emotions awake, and as they grow in intensity everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness. In the German Middle Ages, too, singing and dancing crowds, ever increasing in

number, whirled themselves from place to place under this same Dionysian impulse. In these dancers of St. John and St. Vitus, we rediscover the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks, with their prehistory in Asia Minor, as far back as Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea. There are some who, from obtuseness or lack of experience, turn away from such phenomena as from "folk-diseases," with contempt or pity born of the consciousness of their own "healthy-mindedness." But of course such poor wretches have no idea how corpse-like and ghostly their so-called "healthy-mindedness" looks when the glowing life of the Dionysian revelers roars past them.

Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man. Freely, earth proffers her gifts, and peacefully the beasts of prey of the rocks and desert approach. The chariot of Dionysus is covered with flowers and garlands; panthers and tigers walk under its yoke. Transform Beethoven's "Hymn to Joy" into a painting; let your imagination conceive the multitudes bowing to the dust, awestruck – then you will approach the Dionysian. Now the slave is a free man; now all the rigid, hostile barriers that necessity, caprice, or "impudent convention" have fixed between man and man are broken. Now, with the gospel of universal harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him, as if the veil of *māyā* had been torn aside and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity. In song and in dance man expresses himself as a member of a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk and speak and is on the way toward flying into the air, dancing. His very gestures express enchantment. Just as the animals now talk, and the earth yields milk and honey, supernatural sounds emanate from him, too: he feels himself a god, he himself now walks about enchanted, in ecstasy, like the gods he saw walking in his dreams. He is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art: in these paroxysms of intoxication the artistic power of all nature reveals itself to the highest gratification of the primordial unity. The noblest clay, the most costly marble, man, is here kneaded and cut, and to the sound of the chisel strokes of the Dionysian world-artist

rings out the cry of the Eleusinian mysteries: "Do you prostrate yourselves, millions? Do you sense your Maker, world?"

II

Thus far we have considered the Apollinian and its opposite, the Dionysian, as artistic energies which burst forth from nature herself, *without the mediation of the human artist* – energies in which nature's art impulses are satisfied in the most immediate and direct way – first in the image world of dreams, whose completeness is not dependent upon the intellectual attitude or the artistic culture of any single being; and then as intoxicated reality, which likewise does not heed the single unit, but even seeks to destroy the individual and redeem him by a mystic feeling of oneness. With reference to these immediate art-states of nature, every artist is an "imitator," that is to say, either an Apollinian artist in dreams, or a Dionysian artist in ecstasies, or finally – as for example in Greek tragedy – at once artist in both dreams and ecstasies; so we may perhaps picture him sinking down in his Dionysian intoxication and mystical self-abnegation, alone and apart from the singing revelers, and we may imagine how, through Apollinian dream-inspiration, his own state, i.e., his oneness with the inmost ground of the world, is revealed to him in a *symbolical dream image*.

So much for these general premises and contrasts. Let us now approach the *Greeks* in order to learn how highly these *art impulses of nature* were developed in them. Thus we shall be in a position to understand and appreciate more deeply that relation of the Greek artist to his archetypes which is, according to the Aristotelian expression, "the imitation of nature." In spite of all the dream literature and the numerous dream anecdotes of the Greeks, we can speak of their *dreams* only conjecturally, though with reasonable assurance. If we consider the incredibly precise and unerring plastic power of their eyes, together with their vivid, frank delight in colors, we can hardly refrain from assuming even for their dreams (to the shame of all those born later) a certain logic of line and contour, colors and groups, a certain pictorial sequence reminding us of their finest bas-reliefs whose perfection would

certainly justify us, if a comparison were possible, in designating the dreaming Greeks as Homers and Homer as a dreaming Greek – in a deeper sense than that in which modern man, speaking of his dreams, ventures to compare himself with Shakespeare.

On the other hand, we need not conjecture regarding the immense gap which separates the *Dionysian Greek* from the Dionysian barbarian. From all quarters of the ancient world – to say nothing here of the modern – from Rome to Babylon, we can point to the existence of Dionysian festivals, types which bear, at best, the same relation to the Greek festivals which the bearded satyr, who borrowed his name and attributes from the goat, bears to Dionysus himself. In nearly every case these festivals centered in extravagant sexual licentiousness, whose waves overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me to be the real “witches’ brew.” For some time, however, the Greeks were apparently perfectly insulated and guarded against the feverish excitements of these festivals, though knowledge of them must have come to Greece on all the routes of land and sea; for the figure of Apollo, rising full of pride, held out the Gorgon’s head to this grotesquely uncouth Dionysian power – and really could not have countered any more dangerous force. It is in Doric art that this majestically rejecting attitude of Apollo is immortalized. The opposition between Apollo and Dionysus became more hazardous and even impossible, when similar impulses finally burst forth from the deepest roots of the Hellenic nature and made a path for themselves: the Delphic god, by a seasonably effected reconciliation, now contented himself with taking the destructive weapons from the hands of his powerful antagonist. This reconciliation is the most important moment in the history of the Greek cult: wherever we turn we note the revolutions resulting from this event. The two antagonists were reconciled; the boundary lines to be observed henceforth by each were sharply defined, and there was to be a periodical exchange of gifts of esteem. At bottom, however, the chasm was not bridged over. But if we observe how, under the pressure of this treaty of peace, the Dionysian power revealed itself, we shall now

recognize in the Dionysian orgies of the Greeks, as compared with the Babylonian Sacaea with their reversion of man to the tiger and the ape, the significance of festivals of world redemption and days of transfiguration. It is with them that nature for the first time attains her artistic jubilee; it is with them that the destruction of the *principium individuationis* for the first time becomes an artistic phenomenon. The horrible “witches’ brew” of sensuality and cruelty becomes ineffective; only the curious blending and duality in the emotions of the Dionysian revelers remind us – as medicines remind us of deadly poisons – of the phenomenon that pain begets joy, that ecstasy may wring sounds of agony from us. At the very climax of joy there sounds a cry of horror or a yearning lamentation for an irretrievable loss. In these Greek festivals, nature seems to reveal a sentimental trait; it is as if she were heaving a sigh at her dismemberment into individuals. The song and pantomime of such dually-minded revelers was something new and unheard-of in the Homeric-Greek world; and the Dionysian *music* in particular excited awe and terror. If music, as it would seem, had been known previously as an Apollinian art, it was so, strictly speaking, only as the wave beat of rhythm, whose formative power was developed for the representation of Apollinian states. The music of Apollo was Doric architectonics in tones, but in tones that were merely suggestive, such as those of the cithara. The very element which forms the essence of Dionysian music (and hence of music in general) is carefully excluded as un-Apollinian – namely, the emotional power of the tone, the uniform flow of the melody, and the utterly incomparable world of harmony. In the Dionysian dithyramb man is incited to the greatest exaltation of all his symbolic faculties; something never before experienced struggles for utterance – the annihilation of the viel of *māyā*, oneness as the soul of the race and of nature itself. The essence of nature is now to be expressed symbolically; we need a new world of symbols; and the entire symbolism of the body is called into play, not the mere symbolism of the lips, face, and speech but the whole pantomime of dancing, forcing every member into rhythmic movement. Then the other symbolic powers suddenly press forward, particularly those of music, in rhythmic, dynamics, and harmony. To grasp this collective release of all the

symbolic powers, man must have already attained that height of self-abnegation which seeks to express itself symbolically through all these powers – and so the dithyrambic votary of Dionysus is understood only by his peers. With what astonishment must the Apollinian Greek have beheld him! With an astonishment that was all the greater the more it was mingled with the shuddering suspicion that all this was actually not so very alien to him after all, in fact, that it was only his Apollinian consciousness which, like a veil, hid this Dionysian world from his vision.

III

To understand this, it becomes necessary to level the artistic structure of the *Apollinian culture*, as it were, stone by stone, till the foundations on which it rests become visible. First of all we see the glorious *Olympian* figures of the gods, standing on the gables of this structure. Their deeds, pictured in brilliant reliefs, adorn its friezes. We must not be misled by the fact that Apollo stands side by side with the others as an individual deity, without any claim to priority of rank. For the same impulse that embodied itself in Apollo gave birth to this entire Olympian world, and in this sense Apollo is its father. What terrific need was it that could produce such an illustrious company of Olympian beings?

Whoever approaches these Olympians with another religion in his heart, searching among them for moral elevation, even for sanctity, for disincarnate spirituality, for charity and benevolence, will soon be forced to turn his hack on them, discouraged and disappointed. For there is nothing here that suggests asceticism, spirituality, or duty. We hear nothing but the accents of an exuberant, triumphant life in which all things, whether good or evil, are deified. And so the spectator may stand quite bewildered before this fantastic excess of life, asking himself by virtue of what magic potion these high-spirited men could have found life so enjoyable that, wherever they turned, their eyes beheld the smile of Helen, the ideal picture of their own existence, “floating in sweet sensuality.” But to this spectator, who has already turned his back, we must say: “Do not go away, but stay and hear what Greek folk wisdom has to say of this very life, which with such in-

explicable gaiety unfolds itself before your eyes. “There is an ancient story that King Midas hunted in the forest a long time for the wise Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, without capturing him. When Silenus at last fell into his hands, the king asked what was the best and most desirable of all things for man. Fixed and immovable, the demigod said not a word, till at last, urged by the king, he gave a shrill laugh and broke out into these words: ‘Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is – to die soon.’”

How is the world of the Olympian gods related to this folk wisdom? Even as the rapturous vision of the tortured martyr to his suffering.

Now it is as if the Olympian magic mountain had opened before us and revealed its roots to us. The Greek knew and felt the terror and horror of existence. That he might endure this terror at all, he had to interpose between himself and life the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians. That overwhelming dismay in the face of the titanic powers of nature, the Moira enthroned inexorably over all knowledge, the vulture of the great lover of mankind, Prometheus, the terrible fate of the wise Oedipus, the family curse of the Atridae which drove Orestes to matricide: in short, that entire philosophy of the sylvan god, with its mythical exemplars, which caused the downfall of the melancholy Etruscans – all this was again and again overcome by the Greeks with the aid of the Olympian *middle world* of art; or at any rate it was veiled and withdrawn from sight. It was in order to be able to live that the Greeks had to create these gods from a most profound need. Perhaps we may picture the process to ourselves somewhat as follows: out of the original Titanic divine order of terror, the Olympian divine order of joy gradually evolved through the Apollinian impulse toward beauty, just as roses burst from thorny bushes. How else could this people, so sensitive, so vehement in its desires, so singularly capable of *suffering*, have endured existence, if it had not been revealed to them in their gods, surrounded with a higher glory? The same impulse which calls art into being, as the complement and consummation of existence, seducing

one to a continuation of life, was also the cause of the Olympian world which the Hellenic "will" made use of as a transfiguring mirror. Thus do the gods justify the life of man: they themselves live it – the only satisfactory theodicy! Existence under the bright sunshine of such gods is regarded as desirable in itself, and the real pain of Homeric men is caused by parting from it, especially by early parting: so that now, reversing the wisdom of Silenus, we might say of the Greeks that "to die soon is worst of all for them, the next worst – to die at all." Once heard, it will ring out again; do not forget the lament of the short-lived Achilles, mourning the leaflike change and vicissitudes of the race of men and the decline of the heroic age. It is not unworthy of the greatest hero to long for a continuation of life, even though he live as a day laborer. At the Apollinian stage of development, the "will" longs so vehemently for this existence, the Homeric man feels himself so completely at one with it, that lamentation itself becomes a song of praise.

Here we should note that this harmony which is contemplated with such longing by modern man, in fact, this oneness of man with nature (for which Schiller introduced the technical term "naïve"), is by no means a simple condition that comes into being naturally and as if inevitably. It is not a condition that, like a terrestrial paradise, *must* necessarily be found at the gate of every culture. Only a romantic age could believe this, an age which conceived of the artist in terms of Rousseau's *Emile* and imagined that in Homer it had found such an artist Emile, reared at the bosom of nature. Where we encounter the "naïve" in art, we should recognize the highest effect of Apollinian culture – which always must first overthrow an empire of Titans and slay monsters, and which must have triumphed over an abysmal and terrifying view of the world and the keenest susceptibility to suffering through recourse to the most forceful and pleasurable illusions. But how rarely is the naïve attained – that consummate immersion in the beauty of mere appearance! How unutterably sublime is *Homer* therefore, who, as an individual being, bears the same relation to this Apollinian folk culture as the individual dream artist does to the dream faculty of the people and of nature in general. The Homeric "naïveté" can be understood only as the complete victory of Apollinian illusion: this is one of those

illusions which nature so frequently employs to achieve her own ends. The true goal is veiled by a phantasm: and while we stretch out our hands for the latter, nature attains the former by means of our illusion. In the Greeks the "will" wished to contemplate itself in the transfiguration of genius and the world of art; in order to glorify themselves, its creatures had to feel themselves worthy of glory; they had to behold themselves again in a higher sphere, without this perfect world of contemplation acting as a command or a reproach. This is the sphere of beauty, in which they saw their mirror images, the Olympians. With this mirroring of beauty the Hellenic will combated its artistically correlative talent for suffering and for the wisdom of suffering – and, as a monument of its victory, we have Homer, the naïve artist.

IV

Now the dream analogy may throw some light on the naïve artist. Let us imagine the dreamer: in the midst of the illusion of the dream world and without disturbing it, he calls out to himself: "It is a dream, I will dream on." What must we infer? That he experiences a deep inner joy in dream contemplation; on the other hand, to be at all able to dream with this inner joy in contemplation, he must have completely lost sight of the waking reality and its ominous obtrusiveness. Guided by the dream-reading Apollo, we may interpret all these phenomena in roughly this way. Though it is certain that of the two halves of our existence, the waking and the dreaming states, the former appeals to us as infinitely preferable, more important, excellent, and worthy of being lived, indeed, as that which alone is lived – yet in relation to that mysterious ground of our being of which we are the phenomena, I should, paradoxical as it may seem, maintain the very opposite estimate of the value of dreams. For the more clearly I perceive in nature those omnipotent art impulses, and in them an ardent longing for illusion, for redemption through illusion, the more I feel myself impelled to the metaphysical assumption that the truly existent primal unity, eternally suffering and contradictory, also needs the rapturous vision, the pleasurable illusion, for its continuous redemption. And we, completely

wrapped up in this illusion and composed of it, are compelled to consider this illusion as the truly nonexistent – i.e., as a perpetual becoming in time, space, and causality – in other words, as empirical reality. If, for the moment, we do not consider the question of our own “reality,” if we conceive of our empirical existence, and of that of the world in general, as a continuously manifested representation of the primal unity, we shall then have to look upon the dream as a *mere appearance of mere appearance*, hence as a still higher appeasement of the primordial desire for mere appearance. And that is why the innermost heart of nature feels that ineffable joy in the naïve artist and the naïve work of art, which is likewise only “mere appearance of mere appearance.” In a symbolic painting, *Raphael*, himself one of these immortal “naïve” ones, has represented for us this demotion of appearance to the level of mere appearance, the primitive process of the naïve artist and of Apollinian culture. In his *Transfiguration*, the lower half of the picture, with the possessed boy, the despairing bearers, the bewildered, terrified disciples, shows us the reflection of suffering, primal and eternal, the sole ground of the world: the “mere appearance” here is the reflection of eternal contradiction, the father of things. From this mere appearance arises, like ambrosial vapor, a new visionary world of mere appearances, invisible to those wrapped in the first appearance – a radiant floating in purest bliss, a serene contemplation beaming from wide-open eyes. Here we have presented, in the most sublime artistic symbolism, that Apollinian world of beauty and its substratum, the terrible wisdom of Silenus; and intuitively we comprehend their necessary interdependence. Apollo, however, again appears to us the apotheosis of the *principium individuationis*, in which alone is consummated the perpetually attained goal of the primal unity, its redemption through mere appearance. With his sublime gestures, he shows us how necessary is the entire world of suffering, that by means of it the individual may be impelled to realize the redeeming vision, and then, sunk in contemplation of it, sit quietly in his tossing bark, amid the waves.

If we conceive of it all as imperative and mandatory, this apotheosis of individuation knows but one law – the individual, i.e., the delimiting

of the boundaries of the individual, *measure* in the Hellenic sense. Apollo, as ethical deity, exacts measure of his disciples, and, to be able to maintain it, he requires self-knowledge. And so, side by side with the aesthetic necessity for beauty, there occur the demands “know thyself” and “nothing in excess”; consequently overweening pride and excess are regarded as the truly hostile demons of the non-Apollinian sphere, hence as characteristics of the pre-Apollinian age – that of the Titans; and of the extra-Apollinian world – that of the barbarians. Because of his titanic love for man, Prometheus must be torn to pieces by vultures; because of his excessive wisdom, which could solve the riddle of the Sphinx, Oedipus must be plunged into a bewildering vortex of crime. Thus did the Delphic god interpret the Greek past.

The effects wrought by the *Dionysian* also seemed “titanic” and “barbaric” to the Apollinian Greek; while at the same time he could not conceal from himself that he, too, was inwardly related to these overthrown Titans and heroes. Indeed, he had to recognize even more than this: despite all its beauty and moderation, his entire existence rested on a hidden substratum of suffering and of knowledge, revealed to him by the Dionysian. And behold: Apollo could not live without Dionysus! The “titanic” and the “barbaric” were in the last analysis as necessary as the Apollinian.

And now let us imagine how into this world, built on mere appearance and moderation and artificially dammed up, there penetrated, in tones ever more bewitching and alluring, the ecstatic sound of the Dionysian festival; how in these strains all of nature’s *excess* in pleasure, grief, and knowledge became audible, even in piercing shrieks; and let us ask ourselves what the psalm-odizing artist of Apollo, with his phantom harp-sound, could mean in the face of this demonic folk-song! The muses of the arts of “illusion” paled before an art that, in its intoxication, spoke the truth. The wisdom of Silenus cried “Woe! woe!” to the serene Olympians. The individual, with all his restraint and proportion, succumbed to the self-oblivion of the Dionysian states, forgetting the precepts of Apollo. *Excess* revealed itself as truth. Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, spoke out from the very heart of nature. And so, wherever the Dionysian prevailed, the

Apollinian was checked and destroyed. But, on the other hand, it is equally certain that, wherever the first Dionysian onslaught was successfully withstood, the authority and majesty of the Delphic god exhibited itself as more rigid and menacing than ever. For to me the *Doric* state and Doric art are explicable only as a permanent military encampment of the Apollinian. Only incessant resistance to the titanic-barbaric nature of the Dionysian could account for the long survival of an art so defiantly prim and so encompassed with bulwarks, a training so warlike and rigorous, and a political structure so cruel and relentless.

Up to this point we have simply enlarged upon the observation made at the beginning of this essay: that the Dionysian and the Apollinian, in new births ever following and mutually augmenting one another, controlled the Hellenic genius; that out of the age of "bronze," with its wars of the Titans and its rigorous folk philosophy, the Homeric world developed under the sway of the Apollinian impulse to beauty; that this "naïve" splendor was again overwhelmed by the influx of the Dionysian; and that against this new power the Apollinian rose to the austere majesty of Doric art and the Doric view of the world. If amid the strife to these two hostile principles, the older Hellenic history thus falls into four great periods of art, we are now impelled to inquire after the final goal of these developments and processes, lest perchance we should regard the last-attained period, the period of Doric art, as the climax and aim of these artistic impulses. And here the sublime and celebrated art of *Attic tragedy* and the dramatic dithyramb presents itself as the common goal of both these tendencies whose mysterious union, after many and long precursory struggles, found glorious consummation in this child – at once Antigone and Cassandra.

VII

We must now avail ourselves of all the principles of art considered so far, in order to find our way through the labyrinth, as we must call it, of *the origin of Greek tragedy*. I do not think I am unreasonable in saying that the problem of this origin has as yet not even been seriously posed, to say

nothing of solved, however often the ragged tatters of ancient tradition have been sewn together in various combinations and torn apart again. This tradition tells us quite unequivocally *that tragedy arose from the tragic chorus*, and was originally only chorus and nothing but chorus. Hence we consider it our duty to look into the heart of this tragic chorus as the real proto-drama, without resting satisfied with such arty clichés as that the chorus is the "ideal spectator" or that it represents the people in contrast to the aristocratic region of the scene. [. . .]

It is indeed an "ideal" domain, as Schiller correctly perceived, in which the Greek satyr chorus, the chorus of primitive tragedy, was wont to dwell. It is a domain raised high above the actual paths of mortals. For this chorus the Greek built up the scaffolding of a fictitious *natural state* and on it placed fictitious *natural beings*. On this foundation tragedy developed and so, of course, it could dispense from the beginning with a painstaking portrayal of reality. Yet it is no arbitrary world placed by whim between heaven and earth; rather it is a world with the same reality and credibility that Olympus with its inhabitants possessed for the believing Hellene. The satyr, as the Dionysian chorist, lives in a religiously acknowledged reality under the sanction of myth and cult. That tragedy should begin with him, that he should be the voice of the Dionysian wisdom of tragedy, is just as strange a phenomenon for us as the general derivation of tragedy from the chorus.

Perhaps we shall have a point of departure for our inquiry if I put forward the proposition that the satyr, the fictitious natural being, bears the same relation to the man of culture that Dionysian music bears to civilization. Concerning the latter, Richard Wagner says that it is nullified by music just as lamplight is nullified by the light of day. Similarly, I believe, the Greek man of culture felt himself nullified in the presence of the satyric chorus; and this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature. The metaphysical comfort – with which, I am suggesting even now, every true tragedy leaves us – that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful

and pleasurable – this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and of the history of nations.

With this chorus the profound Hellene, uniquely susceptible to the tenderest and deepest suffering, comforts himself, having looked boldly right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature, and being in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will. Art saves him, and through art – life.

For the rapture of the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a *lethargic* element in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed. This chasm of oblivion separates the worlds of everyday reality and of Dionysian reality. But as soon as this everyday reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such, with nausea: an ascetic, will-negating mood is the fruit of these states. In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint. Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion: that is the doctrine of Hamlet, not that cheap wisdom of Jack the Dreamer who reflects too much and, as it were, from an excess of possibilities does not get around to action. Not reflection, no – true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action, both in Hamlet and in the Dionysian man. Now no comfort avails any more; longing transcends a world after death, even the gods; existence is negated along with its glittering reflection in the gods or in an immortal beyond. Conscious of the truth he has once seen, man now sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of existence; now he understands what is symbolic in Ophelia's fate; now he understands the wisdom of the sylvan god, Silenus: he is nauseated.

Here, when the danger to his will is greatest, *art* approaches as a saving sorceress, expert at healing. She alone knows how to turn these nau-

seous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live: these are the *sublime* as the artistic taming of the horrible, and the *comic* as the artistic discharge of the nausea of absurdity. The satyr chorus of the dithyramb is the saving deed of Greek art; faced with the intermediary world of these Dionysian companions, the feelings described here exhausted themselves.

VIII

The satyr, like the idyllic shepherd of more recent times, is the offspring of a longing for the primitive and the natural; but how firmly and fearlessly the Greek embraced the man of the woods, and how timorously and mawkishly modern man dallied with the flattering image of a sentimental, flute-playing, tender shepherd! Nature, as yet unchanged by knowledge, with the bolts of culture still unbroken – that is what the Greek saw in his satyr who nevertheless was not a mere ape. On the contrary, the satyr was the archetype of man, the embodiment of his highest and most intense emotions, the ecstatic reveler enraptured by the proximity of his god, the sympathetic companion in whom the suffering of the god is repeated, one who proclaims wisdom from the very heart of nature, a symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature which the Greeks used to contemplate with reverent wonder. The satyr was something sublime and divine: thus he had to appear to the painfully broken vision of Dionysian man. The contrived shepherd in his dress-ups would have offended him: on the unconcealed and vigorously magnificent characters of nature, his eye rested with sublime satisfaction; here the true human being was disclosed, the bearded satyr jubilating to his god. Confronted with him, the man of culture shriveled into a mendacious caricature. Schiller is right about these origins of tragic art, too: the chorus is a living wall against the assaults of reality because it – the satyr chorus – represents existence more truthfully, really, and completely than the man of culture does who ordinarily considers himself as the only reality. The sphere of poetry does not lie outside the world as a fantastic impossibility spawned by a poet's brain: it desires to be just the opposite, the unvarnished expression of the truth, and must precisely for that

reason discard the mendacious finery of that alleged reality of the man of culture.

The contrast between this real truth of nature and the lie of culture that poses as if it were the only reality is similar to that between the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself, and the whole world of appearances: just as tragedy, with its metaphysical comfort, points to the eternal life of this core of existence which abides through the perpetual destruction of appearances, the symbolism of the satyr chorus proclaims this primordial relationship between the thing-in-itself and appearance. The idyllic shepherd of modern man is merely a counterfeit of the sum of cultural illusions that arc allegedly nature; the Dionysian Greek wants truth and nature in their most forceful form – and sees himself changed, as by magic, into a satyr. [. . .]

Such magic transformation is the presupposition of all dramatic art. In this magic transformation the Dionysian reveler sees himself as a satyr, *and as a satyr, in turn, he sees the god*, which means that in his metamorphosis he beholds another vision outside himself, as the Apollinian complement of his own state. With this new vision the drama is complete.

In the light of this insight we must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus which ever anew discharges itself in an Apollinian world of images. Thus the choral parts with which tragedy is interlaced are, as it were, the womb that gave birth to the whole of the so-called dialogue, that is, the entire world of the stage, the real drama. In several successive discharges this primal ground of tragedy radiates this vision of the drama which is by all means a dream apparition and to that extent epic in nature; but on the other hand, being the objectification of a Dionysian state, it represents not Apollinian redemption through mere appearance but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being. Thus the drama is the Dionysian embodiment of Dionysian insights and effects and thereby separated, as by a tremendous chasm, from the epic. [. . .]

X

The tradition is undisputed that Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its sole theme the suffer-

ings of Dionysus and that for a long time the only stage hero was Dionysus himself. But it may be claimed with equal confidence that until Euripides, Dionysus never ceased to be the tragic hero; that all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage – Prometheus, Oedipus, etc. – are mere masks of this original hero, Dionysus. That behind all these masks there is a deity, that is one essential reason for the typical “ideality” of these famous figures which has caused so much astonishment. Somebody, I do not know who, has claimed that all individuals, taken as individuals, are comic and hence untragic – from which it would follow that the Greeks simply *could* not suffer individuals on the tragic stage. In fact, this is what they seem to have felt; and the Platonic distinction and evaluation of the “idea” and the “idol,” the mere image, is very deeply rooted in the Hellenic character. Using Plato’s terms we should have to speak of the tragic figures of the Hellenic stage somewhat as follows: the one truly real Dionysus appears in a variety of forms, in the mask of a fighting hero, and entangled, as it were, in the net of the individual will. The god who appears talks and acts so as to resemble an erring, striving, suffering individual. That he *appears* at all with such epic precision and clarity is the work of the dream-interpreter, Apollo, who through this symbolic appearance interprets to the chorus its Dionysian state. In truth, however, the hero is the suffering Dionysus of the Mysteries, the god experiencing in himself the agonies of individuation, of whom wonderful myths tell that as a boy he was torn to pieces by the Titans and now is worshiped in this state as Zagreus. Thus it is intimated that this dismemberment, the properly Dionysian *suffering*, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire, that we are therefore to regard the state of individuation as the origin and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself. From the smile of this Dionysus sprang the Olympian gods, from his tears sprang man. In this existence as a dismembered god, Dionysus possesses the dual nature of a cruel, barbarized demon and a mild, gentle ruler. But the hope of the epopts looked toward a rebirth of Dionysus, which we must now dimly conceive as the end of individuation. It was for this coming third Dionysus that the epopts’ roaring hymns of joy resounded. And it is this hope alone that casts a gleam of joy upon the features of a world torn

asunder and shattered into individuals; this is symbolized in the myth of Demeter, sunk in eternal sorrow, who *rejoices* again for the first time when told that she may *once more* give birth to Dionysus. This view of things already provides us with all the elements of a profound and pessimistic view of the world, together with the *mystery doctrine of tragedy*: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness.

We have already suggested that the Homeric epos is the poem of Olympian culture, in which this culture has sung its own song of victory over the terrors of the war of the Titans. Under the predominating influence of tragic poetry, these Homeric myths are now born anew; and this metempsychosis reveals that in the meantime the Olympian culture also has been conquered by a

still more profound view of the world. The defiant Titan Prometheus has announced to his Olympian tormentor that some day the greatest danger will menace his rule, unless Zeus should enter into an alliance with him in time. In Aeschylus we recognize how the terrified Zeus, fearful of his end, allies himself with the Titan. Thus the former age of the Titans is once more recovered from Tartarus and brought to the light. The philosophy of wild and naked nature beholds with the frank, undissembling gaze of truth the myths of the Homeric world as they dance past: they turn pale, they tremble under the piercing glance of this goddess – till the powerful fist of the Dionysian artist forces them into the service of the new deity. Dionysian truth takes over the entire domain of myth as the symbolism of *its* knowledge which it makes known partly in the public cult of tragedy and partly in the secret celebrations of dramatic mysteries, but always in the old mythical garb.

What is Art?

Leo Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), the famed Russian novelist who wrote *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, considered art a medium for communicating feelings.

Chapter 1

Time and labour spent on art. Lives stunted in its service. Morality sacrificed to art. The rehearsal of an opera described.

TAKE up any one of our ordinary newspapers, and you will find a part devoted to the theatre and music. In almost every number you will find a description of some art-exhibition or of some particular picture, and you will always find reviews of new works of art that have appeared, of volumes of poems, of short stories, or of novels. [. . .]

For the support of art in Russia (where for the education of the people only a hundredth part is spent of what would be required to give every one an opportunity of instruction) the Government grants millions of rubles in subsidies to academies, conservatoires, and theatres. In France twenty million francs are assigned for art, and similar grants are made in Germany and elsewhere.

In every large town enormous buildings are erected for museums, academies, conservatoires, dramatic schools, and for performances and concerts. Hundreds of thousands of workmen—carpenters, masons, painters, joiners, paper-hangers, tailors,

hairdressers, jewellers, moulders, type-setters—spend their whole lives in hard labour to satisfy the demands of art; so that hardly any other department of human activity, the military excepted, consumes so much energy as this.

Not only is enormous labour spent on this activity, but in it, as in war, the very lives of men are sacrificed. Hundreds of thousands of people devote their lives from childhood to learning to twirl their legs rapidly (dancers), or to touch notes and strings very rapidly (musicians), or to sketch with paint and represent what they see (artists), or to turn every phrase inside out and find a rhyme to every word. And these people, often very kind and clever and capable of all sorts of useful labour, grow savage over their specialized and stupefying occupations, and become one-sided and self-complacent specialists, dull to all the serious phenomena of life and skilful only at rapidly twisting their legs, their tongues, or their fingers.

But even this stunting of human life is not the worst. I remember being once at the rehearsal of one of the most ordinary of the new operas which are produced at all the opera houses of Europe and America.

I arrived when the first act had already commenced. To reach the auditorium I had to pass through the stage-entrance. By dark entrances and passages, past immense machines for changing

the scenery and lighting the stage and the theatre, I was led through the vaults of an enormous building; and there in the gloom and dust I saw workmen busily engaged. One of these men—pale, haggard, in a dirty blouse, with dirty, work-worn hands and cramped fingers, evidently tired and out of humour—went past me, angrily scolding another man. Ascending by a dark stair I came out on the boards behind the scenes. Amid various poles and rings and scattered scenery, decorations and curtains, stood and moved dozens, if not hundreds, of painted and dressed-up men in costumes fitting tight to their thighs and calves, and also women, who were, as usual, as nearly nude as might be. These were all singers, or members of the chorus, or ballet-dancers, awaiting their turns. My guide led me across the stage and, by means of a bridge of boards, across the orchestra, in which perhaps a hundred musicians of all kinds, from kettle-drum to flute and harp, were seated, to the dark pit-stalls.

On an elevation, between two lamps with reflectors and in an arm-chair placed before a music-stand, sat the director of the musical part, *bâton* in hand, managing the orchestra and singers, and in general the production of the whole opera.

The performance had already commenced, and on the stage was being represented a procession of Indians who had brought home a bride. Besides men and women in costume, two other men in ordinary clothes bustled and ran about on the stage: one was the director of the dramatic part, and the other, who stepped about in soft shoes and ran from place to place with unusual agility, was the dancing-master, whose salary per month exceeded what ten labourers earn in a year.

These three directors arranged the singing, the orchestra, and the procession. The procession, as usual, was enacted by men and women in couples with tin-foil halberds on their shoulders. They all came from one place and walked round and round again and then stopped. The procession took a long time to arrange: first the Indians with halberds came on too late, then too soon; then at the right time but crowded together at the exit; then they did not crowd but arranged themselves badly at the sides of the stage,—and each time the whole performance was stopped and recommenced from the beginning. The procession is

preceded by a recitative, delivered by a man dressed up like some variety of Turk, who, opening his mouth in a curious way, sings, 'Home I bring the bri-i-ide.' He sings, and waves his arm (which is of course bare) from under his mantle. The procession commences. But here the French horn, in the accompaniment of the recitative, does something wrong; and the director, with a shudder as if some catastrophe had occurred, raps with his stick on the stand. All is stopped, and the director, turning to the orchestra, attacks the French horn, scolding him in the rudest terms—as cabmen abuse one another—for taking the wrong note. And again the whole thing recommences. The Indians with their halberds again come on, treading softly in their extraordinary boots; again the singer sings, 'Home I bring the bri-i-ide.' But here the pairs get too close together. More raps with the stick, more scolding, and a recommencement. Again 'Home I bring the bri-i-ide,' again the same gesticulation with the bare arm from under the mantel and again the couples, treading softly with halberds on their shoulders, some with sad and serious faces, some talking and smiling, arrange themselves in a circle and begin to sing. All seems to be going well, but again the stick raps and the director in a distressed and angry voice begins to scold the men and women of the chorus. It appears that when singing they had omitted to raise their hands from time to time in sign of animation. 'Are you all dead, or what? What oxen you are! Are you corpses, that you can't move?' Again they re-commence, 'Home I bring the bri-i-ide,' and again, with sorrowful faces, the chorus women sing, first one and then another of them raising their hands. But two chorus-girls speak to each other,—again a more vehement rapping with the stick. 'Have you come here to talk? Can't you gossip at home? You there in red breeches, come nearer. Look at me! Begin again!' Again 'Home I bring the bri-i-ide.' And so it goes on for one, two, three hours. The whole of such a rehearsal lasts six hours on end. Raps with the stick, repetitions, placings, corrections of the singers, of the orchestra, of the procession, of the dancers,—all seasoned with angry scolding. I heard the words, 'asses,' 'fools,' 'idiots,' 'swine,' addressed to the musicians and singers at least forty times in the course of one hour. And the unhappy individual to whom the abuse is addressed—flautist,

horn-blower, or singer—physically and mentally demoralized, does not reply, and does what is demanded of him. Twenty times is repeated the one phrase, 'Home I bring the bri-i-ide,' and twenty times the striding about in yellow shoes with a halberd over the shoulder. The conductor knows that these people are so demoralized that they are no longer fit for anything but to blow trumpets and walk about with halberds and in yellow shoes, and that they are also so accustomed to dainty easy living that they will put up with anything rather than lose their luxurious life. He therefore gives free vent to his churlishness, especially as he has seen the same thing done in Paris and Vienna, and knows that this is the way the best conductors behave, and that it is a musical tradition of great artists to be so carried away by the great business of their art that they cannot pause to consider the feelings of other artists.

It would be difficult to find a more repulsive sight. I have seen one workman abuse another for not supporting the weight piled upon him when goods were being unloaded, or at hay-stacking, the village Elder scold a peasant for not making the rick right, and the man submitted in silence. And however unpleasant it was to witness the scene, the unpleasantness was lessened by the consciousness that the business in hand was necessary and important and the fault for which the Elder scolded the labourer was one which might spoil a necessary undertaking.

But what was being done here? For what, and for whom? Very likely the conductor was tired out, like the workman I passed in the vaults; it was even evident that he was; but who made him tire himself? And why was he tiring himself? The opera he was rehearsing was one of the most ordinary of operas for people who are accustomed to them, but also one of the most gigantic absurdities that could possibly be devised. An Indian king wants to marry; they bring him a bride; he disguises himself as a minstrel; the bride falls in love with the minstrel and is in despair, but afterwards discovers that the minstrel is the king, and every one is highly delighted.

That there never were or could be such Indians, and that they were not only unlike Indians but that what they were doing was unlike anything on earth except other operas, was beyond all manner of doubt; that people do not converse in such a way as recitative, and do not

place themselves at fixed distances, in a quartet, waving their arms to express their emotions; that nowhere except in theatres do people walk about in such a manner, in pairs, with tinfoil halberds and in slippers; that no one ever gets angry in such a way, or is affected in such a way, or laughs in such a way, or cries in such a way; and that no one on earth can be moved by such performances—all this is beyond the possibility of doubt.

Instinctively the question presents itself: For whom is this being done? Whom *can* it please? If there are occasionally good melodies in the opera, to which it is pleasant to listen, they could have been sung simply without these stupid costumes and all the processions and recitatives and hand-wavings.

The ballet, in which half-naked women make voluptuous movements, twisting themselves into various sensual wreathings, is simply a lewd performance.

So one is quite at a loss as to whom these things are done for. The man of culture is heartily sick of them, while to a real working man they are utterly incomprehensible. If any one can be pleased by these things (which is doubtful), it can only be some young footman or depraved artisan, who has contracted the spirit of the upper classes but is not yet satiated with their amusements, and wishes to show his breeding.

And all this nasty folly is prepared, not simply, nor with kindly merriment, but with anger and brutal cruelty.

It is said that it is all done for the sake of art and that art is a very important thing. But is it true that art is so important that such sacrifices should be made for its sake? This question is especially urgent because art, for the sake of which the labour of millions, the lives of men, and above all love between man and man, are all being sacrificed—this very art is becoming something more and more vague and uncertain to human perception.

Criticism, in which the lovers of art used to find support for their opinions, has latterly become so self-contradictory that if we exclude from the domain of art all to which the critics of various schools themselves deny the title, there is scarcely any art left.

The artists of various sects, like the theologians of various sects, mutually exclude and destroy

one another. Listen to the artists of the schools of our times, and in all branches you will find each set of artists disowning others. In poetry the old romanticists deny the parnassians and the decadents; the parnassians disown the romanticists and the decadents; the decadents disown all their predecessors and the symbolists; the symbolists disown all their predecessors and *les mages*; and *les mages* disown all, all their predecessors. Among novelists we have naturalists, psychologists, and 'nature-ists,' all rejecting each other. And it is the same in dramatic art, in painting, and in music. So that art, which demands such tremendous labour-sacrifices from the people, which stunts human lives and transgresses against human love, is not only *not* a thing clearly and firmly defined, but is understood in such contradictory ways by its own devotees that it is difficult to say what is meant by art, and especially what is good, useful art,—art for the sake of which we might condone such sacrifices as are being offered at its shrine.

Chapter 4

What, then, is this conception of beauty so stubbornly held to by people of our circle and day as furnishing a definition of art?

In the subjective aspect, we call beauty that which supplies us with a particular kind of pleasure.

In the objective aspect, we call beauty something absolutely perfect, and we acknowledge it to be so only because we receive, from the manifestation of this absolute perfection, a certain kind of pleasure; so this objective definition is nothing but the subjective conception differently expressed. In reality both conceptions of beauty amount to one and the same thing — namely, the reception by us of a certain kind of pleasure; i.e., we call "beauty" that which pleases us without evoking in us desire.

Such being the position of affairs, it would seem only natural that the science of art should decline to content itself with a definition of art based on beauty (i.e., on that which pleases), and seek a general definition which should apply to all artistic productions, and by reference to which we might decide whether a certain article belonged to the realm of art or not. But no such definition is

supplied, as the reader may see from those summaries of the aesthetic theories which I have given, and as he may discover even more clearly from the original aesthetic works if he will be at the pains to read them. All attempts to define absolute beauty in itself — whether as an imitation of nature, or as suitability to its object, or as a correspondence of parts, or as symmetry, or as harmony, or as unity in variety, etc. — either define nothing at all or define only some traits of some artistic productions and are far from including all that everybody has always held, and still holds, to be art.

There is no objective definition of beauty. The existing definitions (both the metaphysical and the experimental) amount only to one and the same subjective definition, which (strange as it seems to say so) is that art is that which makes beauty manifest, and beauty is that which pleases (without exciting desire). Many aestheticians have felt the insufficiency and instability of such a definition, and, in order to give it a firm basis, have asked themselves why a thing pleases. And they have converted the discussion on beauty into a question concerning taste, as did Hutcheson, Voltaire, Diderot, and others. But all attempts to define what taste is must lead to nothing, as the reader may see both from the history of aesthetics and experimentally. There is and can be no explanation of why one thing pleases one man and displeases another, or vice versa. So that the whole existing science of aesthetics fails to do what we might expect from it, being a mental activity calling itself a science; namely, it does not define the qualities and laws of art or of the beautiful (if that be the content of art), or the nature of taste (if taste decides the question of art and its merit), and then, on the basis of such definitions, acknowledge as art those productions which correspond to these laws and reject those which do not come under them. But this science of aesthetics consists in first acknowledging a certain set of productions to be art (because they please us), and then framing such a theory of art that all those productions which please a certain circle of people should fit into it. There exists an art canon according to which certain productions favored by our circle are acknowledged as being art — Phidias, Sophocles, Homer, Titian, Raphael, Bach, Beethoven, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and others — and the aesthetic laws must be such as to embrace all these productions. In aesthetic literature you will incessantly meet with opinions on the

merit and importance of art, founded not on any certain laws by which this or that is held to be good or bad, but merely on the consideration whether this art tallies with the art canon we have drawn up.

The other day I was reading a far from ill-written book by Folgeldt. Discussing the demand for morality in works of art, the author plainly says that we must not demand morality in art. And in proof of this he advances the fact that if we admit such a demand, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* would not fit into the definition of good art; but since both these books are included in our canon of art, he concludes that the demand is unjust. And therefore it is necessary to find a definition of art which shall fit the works; and instead of a demand for morality, Folgeldt postulates as the basis of art a demand for the important (*das Bedeutungsvolle*).

All the existing aesthetic standards are built on this plan. Instead of giving a definition of true art and then deciding what is and what is not good art by judging whether a work conforms or does not conform to the definition, a certain class of works which for some reason please a certain circle of people is accepted as being art, and a definition of art is then devised to cover all these productions. I recently came upon a remarkable instance of this method in a very good German work, *The History of Art in the Nineteenth Century*, by Muther. Describing the pre-Raphaelites, the Decadents and the Symbolists (who are already included in the canon of art), he not only does not venture to blame their tendency, but earnestly endeavors to widen his standard so that it may include them all, they appearing to him to represent a legitimate reaction from the excesses of realism. No matter what insanities appear in art, when once they find acceptance among the upper classes of our society a theory is quickly invented to explain and sanction them, just as if there had never been periods in history when certain special circles of people recognized and approved false, deformed, and insensate art which subsequently left no trace and has been utterly forgotten. And to what lengths the insanity and deformity of art may go, especially when, as in our days, it knows that it is considered infallible, may be seen by what is being done in the art of our circle today.

So the theory of art founded on beauty, expounded by aesthetics, and in dim outline pro-

fessed by the public, is nothing but the setting up as good of that which has pleased and pleases us, i.e., pleases a certain class of people.

In order to define any human activity it is necessary to understand its sense and importance. And in order to do that it is primarily necessary to examine that activity in itself, in its dependence on its causes and in connection with its effects, and not merely in relation to the pleasure we can get from it.

If we say that the aim of any activity is merely our pleasure, and define it solely by that pleasure, our definition will evidently be a false one. But this is precisely what has occurred in the efforts to define art. Now, if we consider the food question it will not occur to anyone to affirm that the importance of food consists in the pleasure we receive when eating it. Everyone understands that the satisfaction of our taste cannot serve as a basis for our definition of the merits of food, and that we have therefore no right to presuppose that the dinners with cayenne pepper, Limburg cheese, alcohol, etc., to which we are accustomed and which please us, form the very best human food.

And in the same way, beauty, or that which pleases us, can in no sense serve as the basis for the definition of art; nor can a series of objects which afford us pleasure serve as the model of what art should be.

To see the aim and purpose of art in the pleasure we get from it is like assuming (as is done by people of the lowest moral development, e.g., by savages) that the purpose and aim of food is the pleasure derived when consuming it.

Just as people who conceive the aim and purpose of food to be pleasure cannot recognize the real meaning of eating, so people who consider the aim of art to be pleasure cannot realize its true meaning and purpose because they attribute to an activity the meaning of which lies in its connection with other phenomena of life, the false and exceptional aim of pleasure. People come to understand that the meaning of eating lies in the nourishment of the body only when they cease to consider that the object of that activity is pleasure. And it is the same with regard to art. People will come to understand the meaning of art only when they cease to consider that the aim of that activity is beauty, i.e., pleasure. The acknowledgment of beauty (i.e., of a certain kind of pleasure received from art) as being the aim of art not only fails to assist us in finding a definition of what art

is, but, on the contrary, by transferring the question into a region quite foreign to art (into metaphysical, psychological, physiological, and even historical discussions as to why such a production pleases one person, and such another displeases or pleases someone else), it renders such definition impossible. And since discussions as to why one man likes pears and another prefers meat do not help toward finding a definition of what is essential in nourishment, so the solution of questions of taste in art (to which the discussions on art involuntarily come) not only does not help to make clear in what this particular human activity which we call art really consists, but renders such elucidation quite impossible until we rid ourselves of a conception which justifies every kind of art at the cost of confusing the whole matter.

To the question, what is this art to which is offered up the labor of millions, the very lives of men, and even morality itself? we have extracted replies from the existing aesthetics, which all amount to this: that the aim of art is beauty, that beauty is recognized by the enjoyment it gives, and that artistic enjoyment is a good and important thing because it *is* enjoyment. In a word, enjoyment is good because it is enjoyment. Thus what is considered the definition of art is no definition at all, but only a shuffle to justify existing art. Therefore, however strange it may seem to say so, in spite of the mountains of books written about art no exact definition of art has been constructed. And the reason for this is that the conception of art has been based on the conception of beauty. [. . .]

What is art – if we put aside the conception of beauty, which confuses the whole matter? The latest and most comprehensible definitions of art, apart from the conception of beauty, are the following: (1) Art is an activity arising even in the animal kingdom, *a*, springing from sexual desire and the propensity to play (Schiller, Darwin, Spencer), and *b*, accompanied by a pleasurable excitement of the nervous system (Grant Allen). This is the physiological-evolutionary definition. (2) Art is the external manifestation by means of lines, colors, movements, sounds, or words, of emotions felt by man (Véron). This is the experimental definition. According to the very latest definition, (3) Art is “the production of some permanent object or passing action, which is fitted,

not only to supply an active enjoyment to the producer, but to convey a pleasurable impression to a number of spectators or listeners, quite apart from any personal advantage to be derived from it” (Sully).

Notwithstanding the superiority of these definitions to the metaphysical definitions which depended on the conception of beauty, they are yet far from exact. The first, the physiological-evolutionary definition (1*a*), is inexact because, instead of speaking about the artistic activity itself, which is the real matter in hand, it treats of the derivation of art. The modification of it (1*b*), based on the physiological effects on the human organism, is inexact because within the limits of such definition many other human activities can be included, as has occurred in the neo-aesthetic theories, which reckon as art the preparation of handsome clothes, pleasant scents, and even victuals.

The experimental definition (2), which makes art consist in the expression of emotions, is inexact because a man may express his emotions by means of lines, colors, sounds, or words, and yet may not act on others by such expression, and then the manifestation of his emotions is not art.

The third definition (that of Sully) is inexact because in the production of objects or actions affording pleasure to the producer and a pleasant emotion to the spectators or hearers, apart from personal advantage, may be included the showing of conjuring tricks or gymnastic exercises and other activities which are not art. And further, many things, the production of which does not afford pleasure to the producer and the sensation received from which is unpleasant, such as gloomy, heartrending scenes in a poetic description or a play, may nevertheless be undoubted works of art.

The inaccuracy of all these definitions arises from the fact that in them all (as also in the metaphysical definitions) the object considered is the pleasure art may give, and not the purpose it may serve in the life of man and of humanity.

In order correctly to define art, it is necessary, first of all, to cease to consider it as a means to pleasure and to consider it as one of the conditions of human life. Viewing it in this way we cannot fail to observe that art is one of the means of intercourse between man and man.

Every work of art causes the receiver to enter into a certain kind of relationship both with him

who produced, or is producing, the art, and with all those who, simultaneously, previously, or subsequently, receive the same artistic impression.

Speech, transmitting the thoughts and experiences of men, serves as a means of union among them, and art acts in a similar manner. The peculiarity of this latter means of intercourse, distinguishing it from intercourse by means of words, consists in this, that whereas by words a man transmits his thoughts to another, by means of art he transmits his feelings.

The activity of art is based on the fact that a man, receiving through his sense of hearing or sight another man's expression of feeling, is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it. To take the simplest example: one man laughs, and another who hears becomes merry; or a man weeps, and another who hears feels sorrow. A man is excited or irritated, and another man seeing him comes to a similar state of mind. By his movements or by the sounds of his voice, a man expresses courage and determination or sadness and calmness, and this state of mind passes on to others. A man suffers, expressing his sufferings by groans and spasms, and this suffering transmits itself to other people; a man expresses his feeling of admiration, devotion, fear, respect, or love to certain objects, persons, or phenomena, and others are infected by the same feelings of admiration, devotion, fear, respect, or love to the same objects, persons, and phenomena.

And it is upon this capacity of man to receive another man's expression of feeling and experience those feelings himself, that the activity of art is based.

If a man infects another or others directly, immediately, by his appearance or by the sounds he gives vent to at the very time he experiences the feeling; if he causes another man to yawn when he himself cannot help yawning, or to laugh or cry when he himself is obliged to laugh or cry, or to suffer when he himself is suffering – that does not amount to art.

Art begins when one person, with the object of joining another or others to himself in one and the same feeling, expresses that feeling by certain external indications. To take the simplest example: a boy, having experienced, let us say, fear on encountering a wolf, relates that encounter; and, in order to evoke in others the feeling he has

experienced, describes himself, his condition before the encounter, the surroundings, the wood, his own lightheartedness, and then the wolf's appearance, its movements, the distance between himself and the wolf, etc. All this, if only the boy, when telling the story, again experiences the feelings he had lived through and infects the hearers and compels them to feel what the narrator had experienced, is art. If even the boy had not seen a wolf but had frequently been afraid of one, and if, wishing to evoke in others the fear he had felt, he invented an encounter with a wolf and recounted it so as to make his hearers share the feelings he experienced when he feared the wolf, that also would be art. And just in the same way it is art if a man, having experienced either the fear of suffering or the attraction of enjoyment (whether in reality or in imagination), expresses these feelings on canvas or in marble so that others are infected by them. And it is also art if a man feels or imagines to himself feelings of delight, gladness, sorrow, despair, courage, or despondency and the transition from one to another of these feelings, and expresses these feelings by sounds so that the hearers are infected by them and experience them as they were experienced by the composer.

The feelings with which the artist infects others may be most various – very strong or very weak, very important or very insignificant, very bad or very good: feelings of love for one's own country, self-devotion and submission to fate or to God expressed in a drama, raptures of lovers described in a novel, feelings of voluptuousness expressed in a picture, courage expressed in a triumphal march, merriment evoked by a dance, humor evoked by a funny story, the feeling of quietness transmitted by an evening landscape or by a lullaby, or the feeling of admiration evoked by a beautiful arabesque – it is all art.

If only the spectators or auditors are infected by the feelings which the author has felt, it is art.

To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling – this is the activity of art.

Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived

through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them.

Art is not, as the metaphysicians say, the manifestation of some mysterious Idea of beauty or God; it is not, as the aesthetical physiologists say, a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy; it is not the expression of man's emotions by external signs; it is not the production of pleasing objects; and, above all, it is not pleasure; but it is a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress toward well-being of individuals and of humanity.

As, thanks to man's capacity to express thoughts by words, every man may know all that has been done for him in the realms of thought by all humanity before his day, and can in the present, thanks to this capacity to understand the thoughts of others, become a sharer in their activity and can himself hand on to his contemporaries and descendants the thoughts he has assimilated from others, as well as those which have arisen within himself; so, thanks to man's capacity to be infected with the feelings of others by means of art, all that is being lived through by his contemporaries is accessible to him, as well as the feelings experienced by men thousands of years ago, and he has also the possibility of transmitting his own feelings to others.

If people lacked this capacity to receive the thoughts conceived by the men who preceded them and to pass on to others their own thoughts, men would be like wild beasts, or like Kaspar Hauser.¹

And if men lacked this other capacity of being infected by art, people might be almost more savage still, and, above all, more separated from, and more hostile to, one another.

And therefore the activity of art is a most important one, as important as the activity of speech itself and as generally diffused.

We are accustomed to understand art to be only what we hear and see in theaters, concerts, and exhibitions, together with buildings, statues, poems, novels.... But all this is but the smallest part of the art by which we communicate with each other in life. All human life is filled with works of art of every kind – from cradlesong, jest, mimicry, the ornamentation of houses, dress, and utensils, up to church services, buildings, monuments, and triumphal processions. It is all artistic

activity. So that by art, in the limited sense of the word, we do not mean all human activity transmitting feelings, but only that part which we for some reason select from it and to which we attach special importance.

This special importance has always been given by all men to that part of this activity which transmits feelings flowing from their religious perception, and this small part of art they have specifically called art, attaching to it the full meaning of the word.

That was how men of old – Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle – looked on art. Thus did the Hebrew prophets and the ancient Christians regard art; thus it was, and still is, understood by the Mohammedans, and thus it still is understood by religious folk among our own peasantry.

Some teachers of mankind – as Plato in his *Republic* and people such as the primitive Christians, the strict Mohammedans, and the Buddhists – have gone so far as to repudiate all art.

People viewing art in this way (in contradiction to the prevalent view of today which regards any art as good if only it affords pleasure) considered, and consider, that art (as contrasted with speech, which need not be listened to) is so highly dangerous in its power to infect people against their wills that mankind will lose far less by banishing all art than by tolerating each and every art.

Evidently such people were wrong in repudiating all art, for they denied that which cannot be denied – one of the indispensable means of communication, without which mankind could not exist. But not less wrong are the people of civilized European society of our class and day in favoring any art if it but serves beauty, i.e., gives people pleasure.

Formerly people feared lest among the works of art there might chance to be some causing corruption, and they prohibited art altogether. Now they only fear lest they should be deprived of any enjoyment art can afford, and patronize any art. And I think the last error is much grosser than the first and that its consequences are far more harmful. [. . .]

But how could it happen that that very art, which in ancient times was merely tolerated (if tolerated at all), should have come in our times to be invariably considered a good thing if only it affords pleasure?

It has resulted from the following causes. The estimation of the value of art (i.e., of the feelings it transmits) depends on men's perception of the meaning of life, depends on what they consider to be the good and the evil of life. And what is good and what is evil is defined by what are termed religions.

Humanity unceasingly moves forward from a lower, more partial and obscure understanding of life to one more general and more lucid. And in this, as in every movement, there are leaders – those who have understood the meaning of life more clearly than others – and of these advanced men there is always one who has in his words and by his life expressed this meaning more clearly, accessibly, and strongly than others. This man's expression of the meaning of life, together with those superstitions, traditions, and ceremonies which usually form themselves round the memory of such a man, is what is called a religion. Religions are the exponents of the highest comprehension of life accessible to the best and foremost men at a given time in a given society – a comprehension toward which, inevitably and irresistibly, all the rest of that society must advance. And therefore only religions have always served, and still serve, as bases for the valuation of human sentiments. If feelings bring men nearer the ideal their religion indicates, if they are in harmony with it and do not contradict it, they are good; if they estrange men from it and oppose it, they are bad.

If the religion places the meaning of life in worshipping one God and fulfilling what is regarded as His will, as was the case among the Jews, then the feelings flowing from love to that God and to His law successfully transmitted through the art of poetry by the prophets, by the psalms, or by the epic of the book of Genesis, is good, high art. All opposing that, as for instance the transmission of feelings of devotion to strange gods or of feelings incompatible with the law of God, would be considered bad art. Or if, as was the case among the Greeks, the religion places the meaning of life in earthly happiness, in beauty and in strength, then art successfully transmitting the joy and energy of life would be considered good art, but art which transmitted feelings of effeminacy or despondency would be bad art. If the meaning of life is seen in the well-being of one's nation or in honoring one's ancestors and

continuing the mode of life led by them, as was the case among the Romans and the Chinese respectively, then art transmitting feelings of joy at sacrificing one's personal well-being for the common weal, or at exalting one's ancestors and maintaining their traditions, would be considered good art, but art expressing feelings contrary to this would be regarded as bad. If the meaning of life is seen in freeing oneself from the yoke of animalism, as is the case among the Buddhists, then art successfully transmitting feelings that elevate the soul and humble the flesh will be good art, and all that transmits feelings strengthening the bodily passions will be bad art.

In every age and in every human society there exists a religious sense, common to that whole society, of what is good and what is bad, and it is this religious conception that decides the value of the feelings transmitted by art. And therefore, among all nations art which transmitted feelings considered to be good by this general religious sense was recognized as being good and was encouraged, but art which transmitted feelings considered to be bad by this general religious conception was recognized as being bad, and was rejected. [. . .]

Art, in our society, has been so perverted that not only has bad art come to be considered good, but even the very perception of what art really is has been lost. In order to be able to speak about the art of our society, it is, therefore, first of all necessary to distinguish art from counterfeit art.

There is one indubitable indication distinguishing real art from its counterfeit, namely, the infectiousness of art. If a man, without exercising effort and without altering his standpoint on reading, hearing, or seeing another man's work, experiences a mental condition which unites him with that man and with other people who also partake of that work of art, then the object evoking that condition is a work of art. And however poetical, realistic, effectful, or interesting a work may be, it is not a work of art if it does not evoke that feeling (quite distinct from all other feelings) of joy and of spiritual union with another (the author) and with others (those who are also infected by it).

It is true that this indication is an *internal* one, and that there are people who have forgotten what the action of real art is, who expect something else from art (in our society the great

majority are in this state), and that therefore such people may mistake for this aesthetic feeling the feeling of diversion and a certain excitement which they receive from counterfeits of art. But though it is impossible to undeceive these people, just as it is impossible to convince a man suffering from "Daltonism" that green is not red, yet, for all that, this indication remains perfectly definite to those whose feeling for art is neither perverted nor atrophied, and it clearly distinguishes the feeling produced by art from all other feelings.

The chief peculiarity of this feeling is that the receiver of a true artistic impression is so united to the artist that he feels as if the work were his own and not someone else's – as if what it expresses were just what he had long been wishing to express. A real work of art destroys, in the consciousness of the receiver, the separation between himself and the artist – not that alone, but also between himself and all whose minds receive this work of art. In this freeing of our personality from its separation and isolation, in this uniting of it with others, lies the chief characteristic and the great attractive force of art.

If a man is infected by the author's condition of soul, if he feels this emotion and this union with others, then the object which has effected this is art; but if there be no such infection, if there be not this union with the author and with others who are moved by the same work – then it is not art. And not only is infection a sure sign of art, but the degree of infectiousness is also the sole measure of excellence in art.

The stronger the infection, the better is the art as art, speaking now apart from its subject matter, i.e., not considering the quality of the feelings it transmits.

And the degree of the infectiousness of art depends on three conditions:

1. On the greater or lesser individuality of the feeling transmitted;
2. on the greater or lesser clearness with which the feeling is transmitted;
3. on the sincerity of the artist, i.e., on the greater or lesser force with which the artist himself feels the emotion he transmits.

The more individual the feeling transmitted the more strongly does it act on the receiver; the more individual the state of soul into which he is

transferred, the more pleasure does the receiver obtain, and therefore the more readily and strongly does he join in it.

The clearness of expression assists infection because the receiver, who mingles in consciousness with the author, is the better satisfied the more clearly the feeling is transmitted, which, as it seems to him, he has long known and felt, and for which he has only now found expression.

But most of all is the degree of infectiousness of art increased by the degree of sincerity in the artist. As soon as the spectator, hearer, or reader feels that the artist is infected by his own production, and writes, sings, or plays for himself, and not merely to act on others, this mental condition of the artist infects the receiver; and contrariwise, as soon as the spectator, reader, or hearer feels that the author is not writing, singing, or playing for his own satisfaction – does not himself feel what he wishes to express – but is doing it for him, the receiver, a resistance immediately springs up, and the most individual and the newest feelings and the cleverest technique not only fail to produce any infection but actually repel.

I have mentioned three conditions of contagiousness in art, but they may be all summed up into one, the last, sincerity, i.e., that the artist should be impelled by an inner need to express his feeling. That condition includes the first; for if the artist is sincere he will express the feeling as he experienced it. And as each man is different from everyone else, his feeling will be individual for everyone else; and the more individual it is – the more the artist has drawn it from the depths of his nature – the more sympathetic and sincere will it be. And this same sincerity will impel the artist to find a clear expression of the feeling which he wishes to transmit.

Therefore this third condition – sincerity – is the most important of the three. It is always complied with in peasant art, and this explains why such art always acts so powerfully; but it is a condition almost entirely absent from our upper-class art, which is continually produced by artists actuated by personal aims of covetousness or vanity.

Such are the three conditions which divide art from its counterfeits, and which also decide the quality of every work of art apart from its subject matter.

The absence of any one of these conditions excludes a work from the category of art and relegates it to that of art's counterfeits. If the work does not transmit the artist's peculiarity of feeling and is therefore not individual, if it is unintelligibly expressed, or if it has not proceeded from the author's inner need for expression – it is not a work of art. If all these conditions are present, even in the smallest degree, then the work, even if a weak one, is yet a work of art.

The presence in various degrees of these three conditions – individuality, clearness, and sincerity – decides the merit of a work of art as art, apart from subject matter. All works of art take rank of merit according to the degree in which they fulfill the first, the second, and the third of these conditions. In one the individuality of the feeling transmitted may predominate; in another, clearness of expression; in a third, sincerity; while a fourth may have sincerity and individuality but be deficient in clearness; a fifth, individuality and clearness but less sincerity; and so forth, in all possible degrees and combinations.

Thus is art divided from that which is not art, and thus is the quality of art as art decided, independently of its subject matter, i.e., apart from whether the feelings it transmits are good or bad.

But how are we to define good and bad art with reference to its subject matter? [. . .]

Art, like speech, is a means of communication, and therefore of progress, i.e., of the movement of humanity forward toward perfection. Speech renders accessible to men of the latest generations all the knowledge discovered by the experience and reflection, both of preceding generations and of the best and foremost men of their own times; art renders accessible to men of the latest generations all the feelings experienced by their predecessors, and those also which are being felt by their best and foremost contemporaries. And as the evolution of knowledge proceeds by truer and more necessary knowledge, dislodging and replacing what is mistaken and unnecessary, so the evolution of feeling proceeds through art – feelings less kind and less needful for the wellbeing of mankind are replaced by others kinder and more needful for that end. That is the purpose of art. And, speaking now of its subject matter, the more art fulfills that purpose the better the art, and the less it fulfills it, the worse the art.

And the appraisal of feelings (i.e., the acknowledgment of these or those feelings as being more or less good, more or less necessary for the well-being of mankind) is made by the religious perception of the age.

In every period of history, and in every human society, there exists an understanding of the meaning of life which represents the highest level to which men of that society have attained, an understanding defining the highest good at which that society aims. And this understanding is the religious perception of the given time and society. And this religious perception is always clearly expressed by some advanced men, and more or less vividly perceived by all the members of the society. Such a religious perception and its corresponding expression exists always in every society. If it appears to us that in our society there is no religious perception, this is not because there really is none, but only because we do not want to see it. And we often wish not to see it because it exposes the fact that our life is inconsistent with that religious perception.

Religious perception in a society is like the direction of a flowing river. If the river flows at all, it must have a direction. If a society lives, there must be a religious perception indicating the direction in which, more or less consciously, all its members tend.

And so there always has been, and there is, a religious perception in every society. And it is by the standard of this religious perception that the feelings transmitted by art have always been estimated. Only on the basis of this religious perception of their age have men always chosen from the endlessly varied spheres of art that art which transmitted feelings making religious perception operative in actual life. And such art has always been highly valued and encouraged, while art transmitting feelings already outlived, flowing from the antiquated religious perceptions of a former age, has always been condemned and despised. All the rest of art, transmitting those most diverse feelings by means of which people commune together, was not condemned, and was tolerated, if only it did not transmit feelings contrary to religious perception. Thus, for instance, among the Greeks art transmitting the feeling of beauty, strength, and courage (Hesiod, Homer, Phidias) was chosen, approved, and encouraged, while art transmitting feelings of rude sensuality,

despondency, and effeminacy was condemned and despised. Among the Jews, art transmitting feelings of devotion and submission to the God of the Hebrews and to His will (the epic of Genesis, the prophets, the Psalms) was chosen and encouraged, while art transmitting feelings of idolatry (the golden calf) was condemned and despised. All the rest of art – stories, songs, dances, ornamentation of houses, of utensils, and of clothes – which was not contrary to religious perception was neither distinguished nor discussed. Thus, in regard to its subject matter, has art been appraised always and everywhere, and thus it should be appraised; for this attitude toward art proceeds from the fundamental characteristics of human nature, and those characteristics do not change.

I know that according to an opinion current in our times religion is a superstition which humanity has outgrown, and that it is therefore assumed that no such thing exists as a religious perception, common to us all, by which art, in our time, can be evaluated. I know that this is the opinion current in the pseudo-cultured circles of today. People who do not acknowledge Christianity in its true meaning because it undermines all their social privileges, and who, therefore, invent all kinds of philosophic and aesthetic theories to hide from themselves the meaninglessness and wrongness of their lives, cannot think otherwise. These people intentionally, or sometimes unintentionally, confusing the conception of a religious cult with the conception of religious perception think that by denying the cult they get rid of religious perception. But even the very attacks on religion and the attempts to establish a life-conception contrary to the religious perception of our times most clearly demonstrate the existence of a religious perception condemning the lives that are not in harmony with it.

If humanity progresses, i.e., moves forward, there must inevitably be a guide to the direction of that movement. And religions have always furnished that guide. All history shows that the progress of humanity is accomplished not otherwise than under the guidance of religion. But if the race cannot progress without the guidance of religion – and progress is always going on, and consequently also in our own times – then there must be a religion of our times. So that, whether it pleases or displeases the so-called cultured people

of today, they must admit the existence of religion – not of a religious cult, Catholic, Protestant, or another, but of a religious perception – which, even in our times, is the guide always present where there is any progress. And if a religious perception exists among us, then our art should be appraised on the basis of that religious perception; and, as has always and everywhere been the case, art transmitting feelings flowing from the religious perception of our time should be chosen from all the indifferent art, should be acknowledged, highly esteemed, and encouraged, while art running counter to that perception should be condemned and despised, and all the remaining indifferent art should neither be distinguished nor encouraged.

The religious perception of our time, in its widest and most practical application, is the consciousness that our well-being, both material and spiritual, individual and collective, temporal and eternal, lies in the growth of brotherhood among all men – in their loving harmony with one another. This perception is not only expressed by Christ and all the best men of past ages, it is not only repeated in the most varied forms and from most diverse sides by the best men of our own times, but it already serves as a clue to all the complex labor of humanity, consisting as this labor does, on the one hand, in the destruction of physical and moral obstacles to the union of men, and, on the other hand, in establishing the principles common to all men which can and should unite them into one universal brotherhood. And it is on the basis of this perception that we should appraise all the phenomena of our life, and, among the rest, our art also; choosing from all its realms whatever transmits feelings flowing from this religious perception, highly prizing and encouraging such art, rejecting whatever is contrary to this perception, and not attributing to the rest of art an importance not properly pertaining to it.

The chief mistake made by people of the upper classes of the time of the so-called Renaissance – a mistake which we still perpetuate – was not that they ceased to value and to attach importance to religious art (people of that period could not attach importance to it, because, like our own upper classes, they could not believe in what the majority considered to be religion), but their mistake was that they set up in place of religious art, which was lacking, an insignificant art which

aimed only at giving pleasure, i.e., they began to choose, to value, and to encourage in place of religious art something which in any case did not deserve such esteem and encouragement.

One of the Fathers of the Church said that the great evil is not that men do not know God, but that they have set up, instead of God, that which is not God. So also with art. The great misfortune of the people of the upper classes of our time is not so much that they are without a religious art as such; instead of a supreme religious art, chosen from all the rest as being specially important and valuable, they have chosen a most insignificant and, usually, harmful art which aims at pleasing certain people and which, therefore, if only by its exclusive nature, stands in contradiction to that Christian principle of universal union which forms the religious perception of our time. Instead of religious art, an empty and often vicious art is set up, and this hides from men's notice the need of that true religious art which should be present in order to improve life.

It is true that art which satisfies the demands of the religious perception of our time is quite unlike former art, but, notwithstanding this dissimilarity, to a man who does not intentionally hide the truth from himself, it is very clear and definite what does form the religious art of our age. In former times, when the highest religious

perception united only some people (who, even if they formed a large society, were yet but one society surrounded by others – Jews, or Athenian, or Roman citizens), the feelings transmitted by the art of that time flowed from a desire for the might, greatness, glory, and prosperity of that society, and the heroes of art might be people who contributed to that prosperity by strength, by craft, by fraud, or by cruelty (Ulysses, Jacob, David, Samson, Hercules, and all the heroes). But the religious perception of our times does not select any one society of men; on the contrary, it demands the union of all – absolutely of all people without exception – and above every other virtue it sets brotherly love to all men. And therefore, the feelings transmitted by the art of our time not only cannot coincide with the feelings transmitted by former art, but must run counter to them.

Translator's Note

- 1 "The foundling of Nuremburg," found in the market place of that town on May 26, 1828, apparently some sixteen years old. He spoke little and was almost totally ignorant even of common objects. He subsequently explained that he had been brought up in confinement underground and visited by only one man, whom he seldom saw.

“Psychical Distance” as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle

Edward Bullough

Edward Bullough (1880–1934), a
Professor of Italian Literature at
Cambridge University, stressed the
importance of disinterestedness in the
appreciation of a work of art.

I

1. The conception of ‘Distance’ suggests, in connexion with Art, certain trains of thought by no means devoid of interest or of speculative importance. Perhaps the most obvious suggestion is that of *actual spatial* distance, i.e. the distance of a work of Art from the spectator, or that of *represented spatial* distance, i.e. the distance represented within the work. Less obvious, more metaphorical, is the meaning of *temporal* distance. The first was noticed already by Aristotle in his *Poetics*; the second has played a great part in the history of painting in the form of perspective; the distinction between these two kinds of distance assumes special importance theoretically in the differentiation between sculpture in the round, and relief-sculpture. Temporal distance, remoteness from us in point of time, though often a cause of misconceptions, has been declared to be a factor of considerable weight in our appreciation.

It is not, however, in any of these meanings that ‘Distance’ is put forward here, though it will be clear in the course of this essay that the above mentioned kinds of distance are rather special forms of the conception of Distance as advocated here, and derive whatever *aesthetic* qualities they may possess from Distance in its *general* connotation. This general connotation is ‘Psychical Distance.’

A short illustration will explain what is meant by ‘Psychical Distance.’ Imagine a fog at sea: for most people it is an experience of acute unpleasantness. Apart from the physical annoyance and remoter forms of discomfort such as delays, it is apt to produce feelings of peculiar anxiety, fears of invisible dangers, strains of watching and listening for distant and unlocalised signals. The listless movements of the ship and her warning calls soon tell upon the nerves of the passengers; and that special, expectant, tacit anxiety and nervousness, always associated with this experience, make a fog the dreaded terror of the sea (all the more terrifying because of its very silence and gentleness) for the expert seafarer no less than for the ignorant landsman.

Nevertheless, a fog at sea can be a source of intense relish and enjoyment. Abstract from the

experience of the sea fog, for the moment, its danger and practical unpleasantness, just as every one in the enjoyment of a mountain-climb disregards its physical labour and its danger (though, it is not denied, that these may incidentally enter into the enjoyment and enhance it); direct the attention to the features 'objectively' constituting the phenomenon – the veil surrounding you with an opaqueness as of transparent milk, blurring the outline of things and distorting their shapes into weird grotesqueness; observe the carrying-power of the air, producing the impression as if you could touch some far-off siren by merely putting out your hand and letting it lose itself behind that white wall; note the curious creamy smoothness of the water, hypocritically denying as it were any suggestion of danger; and, above all, the strange solitude and remoteness from the world, as it can be found only on the highest mountain tops: and the experience may acquire, in its uncanny mingling of repose and terror, a flavour of such concentrated poignancy and delight as to contrast sharply with the blind and distempered anxiety of its other aspects. This contrast, often emerging with startling suddenness, is like a momentary switching on of some new current, or the passing ray of a brighter light, illuminating the outlook upon perhaps the most ordinary and familiar objects – an impression which we experience sometimes in instants of direct extremity, when our practical interest snaps like a wire from sheer over-tension, and we watch the consummation of some impending catastrophe with the marvelling unconcern of a mere spectator.

It is a difference of outlook, due – if such a metaphor is permissible – to the insertion of Distance. This Distance appears to lie between our own self and its affections, using the latter term in its broadest sense as anything which affects our being, bodily or spiritually, e.g. as sensation, perception, emotional state or idea. Usually, though not always, it amounts to the same thing to say that the Distance lies between our own self and such objects as are the sources or vehicles of such affections.

Thus, in the fog, the transformation by Distance is produced in the first instance by putting the phenomenon, so to speak, out of gear with our practical, actual self; by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends – in short, by looking at it 'objectively,' as it

has often been called, by permitting only such reactions on our part as emphasise the 'objective' features of the experience, and by interpreting even our 'subjective' affections not as modes of *our* being but rather as characteristics of the phenomenon.

The working of Distance is, accordingly, not simple, but highly complex. It has a *negative*, inhibitory aspect – the cutting-out of the practical sides of things and of our practical attitude to them – and a *positive* side – the elaboration of the experience on the new basis created by the inhibitory action of Distance.

2. Consequently, this distanced view of things is not, and cannot be, our normal outlook. As a rule, experiences constantly turn the same side towards us, namely, that which has the strongest practical force of appeal. We are not ordinarily aware of those aspects of things which do not touch us immediately and practically, nor are we generally conscious of impressions apart from our own self which is impressed. The sudden view of things from their reverse, usually unnoticed, side, comes upon us as a revelation, and such revelations are precisely those of Art. In this most general sense, Distance is a factor in all Art.

3. It is, for this very reason, also an aesthetic principle. The aesthetic contemplation and the aesthetic outlook have often been described as 'objective.' We speak of 'objective' artists as Shakespeare or Velasquez, of 'objective' works or art forms as Homer's *Iliad* or the drama. It is a term constantly occurring in discussions and criticisms, though its sense, if pressed at all, becomes very questionable. For certain forms of Art, such as lyrical poetry, are said to be 'subjective'; Shelley, for example, would usually be considered a 'subjective' writer. On the other hand, no work of Art can be genuinely 'objective' in the sense in which this term might be applied to a work on history or to a scientific treatise; nor can it be 'subjective' in the ordinary acceptance of that term, as a personal feeling, a direct statement of a wish or belief, or a cry of passion is subjective. 'Objectivity' and 'subjectivity' are a pair of opposites which in their mutual exclusiveness when applied to Art soon lead to confusion.

Nor are they the only pair of opposites. Art has with equal vigour been declared alternately 'idealistic' and 'realistic,' 'sensual' and 'spiritual,' 'individualistic' and 'typical.' Between the defence

of either terms of such antitheses most aesthetic theories have vacillated. It is one of the contentions of this essay that such opposites find their synthesis in the more fundamental conception of Distance.

Distance further provides the much needed criterion of the beautiful as distinct from the merely agreeable.

Again, it marks one of the most important steps in the process of artistic creation and serves as a distinguishing feature of what is commonly so loosely described as the 'artistic temperament.'

Finally, it may claim to be considered as one of the essential characteristics of the 'aesthetic consciousness,' – if I may describe by this term that special mental attitude towards, and outlook upon, experience, which finds its most pregnant expression in the various forms of Art.

II

Distance, as I said before, is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's own self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends. Thereby the 'contemplation' of the object becomes alone possible. But it does not mean that the relation between the self and the object is broken to the extent of becoming 'impersonal.' Of the alternatives 'personal' and 'impersonal' the latter surely comes nearer to the truth; but here, as elsewhere, we meet the difficulty of having to express certain facts in terms coined for entirely different uses. To do so usually results in paradoxes, which are nowhere more inevitable than in discussions upon Art. 'Personal' and 'impersonal,' 'subjective' and 'objective' are such terms, devised for purposes other than aesthetic speculation, and becoming loose and ambiguous as soon as applied outside the sphere of their special meanings. In giving preference therefore to the term 'impersonal' to describe the relation between the spectator and a work of Art, it is to be noticed that it is not impersonal in the sense in which we speak of the 'impersonal' character of Science, for instance. In order to obtain 'objectively valid' results, the scientist excludes the 'personal factor,' i.e. his personal wishes as to the validity of his results, his predilection for any particular system to be proved or disproved by his research. It goes without saying that all exper-

iments and investigations are undertaken out of a personal interest in the science, for the ultimate support of a definite assumption, and involve personal hopes of success; but this does not affect the 'dispassionate' attitude of the investigator, under pain of being accused of 'manufacturing his evidence.'

1. Distance does not imply an impersonal, purely intellectually interested relation of such a kind. On the contrary, it describes a *personal* relation, often highly emotionally coloured, but of a *peculiar character*. Its peculiarity lies in that the personal character of the relation has been, so to speak, filtered. It has been cleared of the practical, concrete nature of its appeal, without, however, thereby losing its original constitution. One of the best-known examples is to be found in our attitude towards the events and characters of the drama: they appeal to us like persons and incidents of normal experience, except that that side of their appeal, which would usually affect us in a directly personal manner, is held in abeyance. This difference, so well known as to be almost trivial, is generally explained by reference to the knowledge that the characters and situations are 'unreal,' imaginary. In this sense Witasek,¹ operating with Meinong's theory of *Annahmen*, has described the emotions involved in witnessing a drama as *Scheingefühle*, a term which has so frequently been misunderstood in discussions of his theories. But, as a matter of fact, the 'assumption' upon which the imaginative emotional reaction is based is not necessarily the condition, but often the consequence, of Distance; that is to say, the converse of the reason usually stated would then be true: viz, that Distance, by changing our relation to the characters, renders them seemingly fictitious, not that the fictitiousness of the characters alters our feelings toward them. It is, of course, to be granted that the actual and admitted unreality of the dramatic action reinforces the effect of Distance. But surely the proverbial unsophisticated yokel whose chivalrous interference in the play on behalf of the hapless heroine can only be prevented by impressing upon him that 'they are only pretending,' is not the ideal type of theatrical audience. The proof of the seeming paradox that it is Distance which primarily gives to dramatic action the appearance of unreality and not *vice versa*, is the observation that the same filtration of our sentiments and the same seeming 'unreality' of *actual* men and things

occur, when at times, by a sudden change of inward perspective, we are overcome by the feeling that "all the world's a stage."

2. This personal, but 'distanced' relation (as I will venture to call this nameless character of our view) directs attention to a strange fact which appears to be one of the fundamental paradoxes of Art: it is what I propose to call 'the antinomy of Distance.'

It will be readily admitted that a work of Art has the more chance of appealing to us the better it finds us prepared for its particular kind of appeal. Indeed, without some degree of predisposition on our part, it must necessarily remain incomprehensible, and to that extent unappreciated. The success and intensity of its appeal would seem, therefore, to stand in direct proportion to the completeness with which it corresponds with our intellectual and emotional peculiarities and the idiosyncracies of our experience. The absence of such a concordance between the characters of a work and of the spectator is, of course, the most general explanation for differences of 'tastes.'

At the same time, such a principle of concordance requires a qualification, which leads at once to the antinomy of Distance.

Suppose a man, who believes that he has cause to be jealous about his wife, witnesses a performance of 'Othello.' He will the more perfectly appreciate the situation, conduct and character of Othello, the more exactly the feelings and experiences of Othello coincide with his own – at least he *ought* to on the above principle of concordance. In point of fact, he will probably do anything but appreciate the play. In reality, the concordance will merely render him acutely conscious of his own jealousy; by a sudden reversal of perspective he will no longer see Othello apparently betrayed by Desdemona, but himself in an analogous situation with his own wife. The reversal of perspective is the consequence of the loss of Distance.

If this be taken as a typical case, it follows that the qualification required is that the coincidence should be as complete as is compatible with maintaining Distance. The jealous spectator of 'Othello' will indeed appreciate and enter into the play the more keenly, the greater the resemblance with his own experience – *provided* that he succeeds in keeping the Distance between the action of the play and his personal feelings: a very dif-

ficult performance in the circumstances. It is on account of the same difficulty that the expert and the professional critic make a bad audience, since their expertness and critical professionalism are *practical* activities, involving their concrete personality and constantly endangering their Distance. [It is, by the way, one of the reasons why Criticism is an art, for it requires the constant interchange from the practical to the distanced attitude and *vice versa*, which is characteristic of artists.]

The same qualification applies to the artist. He will prove artistically most effective in the formulation of an intensely *personal* experience, but he can formulate it artistically only on condition of a detachment from the experience *quâ personal*. Hence the statement of so many artists that artistic formulation was to them a kind of catharsis, a means of ridding themselves of feelings and ideas the acuteness of which they felt almost as a kind of obsession. Hence, on the other hand, the failure of the average man to convey to others at all adequately the impression of an overwhelming joy or sorrow. His personal implication in the event renders it impossible for him to formulate and present it in such a way as to make others, like himself, feel all the meaning and fulness which it possesses for him.

What is therefore, both in appreciation and production, most desirable is the *utmost decrease of Distance without its disappearance*.

3. Closely related, in fact a presupposition to the 'antinomy,' is the *variability of Distance*. Herein especially lies the advantage of Distance compared with such terms as 'objectivity' and 'detachment.' Neither of them implies a *personal* relation – indeed both actually preclude it; and the mere inflexibility and exclusiveness of their opposites render their application generally meaningless.

Distance, on the contrary, admits naturally of degrees, and differs not only according to the nature of the *object*, which may impose a greater or smaller degree of Distance, but varies also according to the *individual's capacity* for maintaining a greater or lesser degree. And here one may remark that not only do *persons differ from each other* in their habitual measure of Distance, but that the *same individual differs* in his ability to maintain it in the face of different objects and of different arts.

There exist, therefore, two different sets of conditions affecting the degree of Distance in any given case: those offered by the object and those realised by the subject. In their interplay they afford one of the most extensive explanations for varieties of aesthetic experience, since loss of Distance, whether due to the one or the other, means loss of aesthetic appreciation.

In short, Distance may be said to *be variable both according to the distancing-power of the individual, and according to the character of the object.*

There are two ways of losing Distance: either to 'under-distance' or to over-distance.' 'Under-distancing' is the commonest failing of the *subject*, an excess of Distance is a frequent failing of *Art*, especially in the past. Historically it looks almost as if Art had attempted to meet the deficiency of Distance on the part of the subject and had over-shot the mark in this endeavour. It will be seen later that this is actually true, for it appears that over-distanced Art is specially designed for a class of appreciation which has difficulty to rise spontaneously to any degree of Distance. The consequence of a loss of Distance through one or other cause is familiar: the verdict in the case of under-distancing is that the work is 'crudely naturalistic,' 'harrowing,' 'repulsive in its realism.' An excess of Distance produces the impression of improbability, artificiality, emptiness or absurdity.

The individual tends, as I just stated, to under-distance rather than to lose Distance by over-distancing. *Theoretically* there is no limit to the decrease of Distance. In theory, therefore, not only the usual subjects of Art, but even the most personal affections, whether ideas, percepts or emotions, can be sufficiently distanced to be aesthetically appreciable. Especially artists are gifted in this direction to a remarkable extent. The average individual, on the contrary, very rapidly reaches his limit of decreasing Distance, his 'Distance-limit,' i.e. that point at which Distance is lost and appreciation either disappears or changes its character.

In the *practice*, therefore, of the average person, a limit does exist which marks the minimum at which his appreciation can maintain itself in the aesthetic field, and this average minimum lies considerably higher than the Distance-limit of the artist. It is practically impossible to fix this

average limit, in the absence of data, and on account of the wide fluctuations from person to person to which this limit is subject. But it is safe to infer that, in art practice, explicit references to organic affections, to the material existence of the body, especially to sexual matters, lie normally below the Distance-limit, and can be touched upon by Art only with special precautions. Allusions to social institutions of any degree of personal importance – in particular, allusions implying any doubt as to their validity – the questioning of some generally recognised ethical sanctions, references to topical subjects occupying public attention at the moment, and such like, are all dangerously near the average limit and may at any time fall below it, arousing, instead of aesthetic appreciation, concrete hostility or mere amusement.

This difference in the Distance-limit between artists and the public has been the source of much misunderstanding and injustice. Many an artist has seen his work condemned, and himself ostracized for the sake of so-called 'immoralities' which to him were *bonâ fide* aesthetic objects. His power of distancing, nay, the necessity of distancing feelings, sensations, situations which for the average person are too intimately bound up with his concrete existence to be regarded in that light, have often quite unjustly earned for him accusations of cynicism, sensualism, morbidity or frivolity. The same misconception has arisen over many 'problem plays' and 'problem novels' in which the public have persisted in seeing nothing but a supposed 'problem' of the moment, whereas the author may have been – and often has demonstrably been – able to distance the subject-matter sufficiently to rise above its practical problematic import and to regard it simply as a dramatically and humanly interesting situation.

The variability of Distance in respect to Art, disregarding for the moment the subjective complication, appears both as a general feature in Art, and in the differences between the special arts.

It has been an old problem why the 'arts of the eye and of the ear' should have reached the practically exclusive predominance over arts of other senses. Attempts to raise 'culinary art' to the level of a Fine Art have failed in spite of all propaganda, as completely as the creation of scent or liqueur 'symphonies.' There is little doubt that, apart from other excellent reasons² of a partly

psycho-physical, partly technical nature, the actual, *spatial distance* separating objects of sight and hearing from the subject has contributed strongly to the development of this monopoly. In a similar manner *temporal remoteness* produces Distance, and objects removed from us in point of time are *ipso facto* distanced to an extent which was impossible for their contemporaries. Many pictures, plays and poems had, as a matter of fact, rather an expository or illustrating significance – as for instance much ecclesiastical Art – or the force of a direct practical appeal – as the invectives of many satires or comedies – which seem to us nowadays irreconcilable with their aesthetic claims. Such works have consequently profited greatly by lapse of time and have reached the level of Art only with the help of temporal distance, while others, on the contrary, often for the same reason have suffered a loss of Distance, through *over-distancing*.

Special mention must be made of a group of artistic conceptions which present excessive Distance in their form of appeal rather than in their actual presentation – a point illustrating the necessity of distinguishing between distancing an object and distancing the appeal of which it is the source. I mean here what is often rather loosely termed ‘idealistic Art,’ that is, Art springing from abstract conceptions, expressing allegorical meanings, or illustrating general truths. Generalisations and abstractions suffer under this disadvantage that they have too much general applicability to invite a personal interest in them, and too little individual concreteness to prevent them applying to us in all their force. They appeal to everybody and therefore to none. An axiom of Euclid belongs to nobody, just because it compels everyone’s assent; general conceptions like Patriotism, Friendship, Love, Hope, Life, Death, concern as much Dick, Tom and Harry as myself, and I therefore either feel unable to get into any kind of personal relation to them or, if I do so, they become at once, emphatically or concretely, *my* Patriotism, *my* Friendship, *my* Love, *my* Hope, *my* Life and Death. By mere force of generalisation, a general truth or a universal ideal is so far distanced from myself that I fail to realise it concretely at all, or, when I do so, I can realise it only as part of my *practical actual being*, i.e. it falls below the Distance-limit altogether. ‘Idealistic Art’ suffers consequently under the

peculiar difficulty that its excess of Distance turns generally into an *under-distanced* appeal – all the more easily, as it is the usual failing of the subject to *under*-rather than to *over*-distance.

The different special arts show at the present time very marked variations in the degree of Distance which they usually impose or require for their appreciation. Unfortunately here again the absence of data makes itself felt and indicates the necessity of conducting observations, possibly experiments, so as to place these suggestions upon a securer basis. In one single art, viz, the *theatre*, a small amount of information is available, from an unexpected source, namely the proceedings of the censorship committee,³ which on closer examination might be made to yield evidence of interest to the psychologist. In fact, the whole censorship problem, as far as it does not turn upon purely economic questions, may be said to hinge upon Distance; if every member of the public could be trusted to keep it, there would be no sense whatever in the existence of a censor of plays. There is, of course, no doubt that, speaking generally, theatrical performances *eo ipso* run a special risk of a loss of Distance owing to the material presentment⁴ of its subject-matter. The physical presence of living human beings as vehicles of dramatic art is a difficulty which no art has to face in the same way. A similar, in many ways even greater, risk confronts *dancing*: though attracting perhaps a less widely spread human interest, its animal spirits are frequently quite unrelieved by any glimmer of spirituality and consequently form a proportionately stronger lure to under-distancing. In the higher forms of dancing technical execution of the most wearing kind makes up a great deal for its intrinsic tendency towards a loss of Distance, and as a popular performance, at least in southern Europe, it has retained much of its ancient artistic glamour, producing a peculiarly subtle balancing of Distance between the pure delight of bodily movement and high technical accomplishment. In passing, it is interesting to observe (as bearing upon the development of Distance), that this art, once as much a fine art as music and considered by the Greeks as a particularly valuable educational exercise, should – except in sporadic cases – have fallen so low from the pedestal it once occupied. Next to the theatre and dancing stands *sculpture*. Though not using a *living* bodily medium, yet the human

form in its full spatial materiality constitutes a similar threat to Distance. Our northern habits of dress and ignorance of the human body have enormously increased the difficulty of distancing Sculpture, in part through the gross misconceptions to which it is exposed, in part owing to a complete lack of standards of bodily perfection, and an inability to realise the distinction between sculptural form and bodily shape, which is the only but fundamental point distinguishing a statue from a cast taken from life. In *painting* it is apparently the form of its presentment and the usual reduction in scale which would explain why this art can venture to approach more closely than sculpture to the normal Distance-limit. As this matter will be discussed later in a special connexion this simple reference may suffice here. *Music* and *architecture* have a curious position. These two most abstract of all arts show a remarkable fluctuation in their Distances. Certain kinds of music, especially 'pure' music, or 'classical' or 'heavy' music, appear for many people over-distanced; light, 'catchy' tunes, on the contrary, easily reach that degree of decreasing Distance below which they cease to be Art and become a pure amusement. In spite of its strange abstractness which to many philosophers has made it comparable to architecture and mathematics, music possesses a sensuous, frequently sensual, character: the undoubted physiological and muscular stimulus of its melodies and harmonies, no less than its rhythmic aspects, would seem to account for the occasional disappearance of Distance. To this might be added its strong tendency, especially in unmusical people, to stimulate trains of thought quite disconnected with itself, following channels of subjective inclinations, – day-dreams of a more or less directly personal character. *Architecture* requires almost uniformly a very great Distance; that is to say, the majority of persons derive no aesthetic appreciation from architecture as such, apart from the incidental impression of its decorative features and its associations. The causes are numerous, but prominent among them are the confusion of building with architecture and the predominance of utilitarian purposes, which overshadow the architectural claims upon the attention.

4. That all art requires a Distance-limit beyond which, and a Distance within which only, aesthetic appreciation becomes possible, is the

psychological formulation of a general characteristic of Art, viz, its *anti-realistic nature*. Though seemingly paradoxical, this applies as much to 'naturalistic' as to 'idealistic' Art. The difference commonly expressed by these epithets is at bottom merely the difference in the degree of Distance; and this produces, so far as 'naturalism' and 'idealism' in Art are not meaningless labels, the usual result that what appears obnoxiously 'naturalistic' to one person, may be 'idealistic' to another. To say that Art is anti-realistic simply insists upon the fact that Art is not nature, never pretends to be nature and strongly resists any confusion with nature. It emphasizes the *art*-character of Art: 'artistic' is synonymous with 'anti-realistic'; it explains even sometimes a very marked degree of artificiality.

"Art is an imitation of nature," was the current art-conception in the 18th century. It is the fundamental axiom of the standard-work of that time upon aesthetic theory by the Abbé Du Bos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, 1719; the idea received strong support from the literal acceptance of Aristotle's theory of *μιμησις* and produced echoes everywhere, in Lessing's *Laocoon* no less than in Burke's famous statement that "all Art is great as it deceives." Though it may be assumed that since the time of Kant and of the Romanticists this notion has died out, it still lives in unsophisticated minds. Even when formally denied, it persists, for instance, in the belief that "Art idealises nature," which means after all only that Art copies nature with certain improvements and revisions. Artists themselves are unfortunately often responsible for the spreading of this conception. Whistler indeed said that to produce Art by imitating nature would be like trying to produce music by sitting upon the piano, but the selective, idealising imitation of nature finds merely another support in such a saying. Naturalism, pleinairism, impressionism, – even the guileless enthusiasm of the artist for the works of nature, her wealth of suggestion, her delicacy of workmanship, for the steadfastness of her guidance, only produce upon the public the impression that Art is, after all, an imitation of nature. Then how can it be anti-realistic? The antithesis, Art *versus* nature, seems to break down. Yet if it does, what is the sense of Art?

Here the conception of Distance comes to the rescue. The solution of the dilemma lies in the

'antinomy of Distance' with its demand: utmost decrease of Distance without its disappearance. The simple observation that Art is the more effective, the more it falls into line with our predispositions which are inevitably moulded on general experience and nature, has always been the original motive for 'naturalism.' 'Naturalism,' 'impressionism' is no new thing; it is only a new name for an innate leaning of Art, from the time of the Chaldeans and Egyptians down to the present day. Even the Apollo of Tenea apparently struck his contemporaries as so startlingly 'naturalistic' that the subsequent legend attributed a superhuman genius to his creator. A constantly closer approach to nature, a perpetual refining of the limit of Distance, yet without overstepping the dividing line of art and nature, has always been the inborn bent of art. To deny this dividing line has occasionally been the failing of naturalism. But no theory of naturalism is complete which does not at the same time allow for the intrinsic idealism of Art: for both are merely degrees in that wide range lying beyond the Distance-limit. To imitate nature so as to trick the spectator into the deception that it is nature which he beholds, is to forsake Art, its anti-realism, its distanced spirituality, and to fall below the limit into sham, sensationalism or platitude.

But what, in the theory of antinomy of Distance requires explanation is the existence of an *idealistic, highly distanced* Art. There are numerous reasons to account for it; indeed in so complex a phenomenon as Art, *single* causes can be pronounced almost *a priori* to be false. Foremost among such causes which have contributed to the formation of an idealistic Art appears to stand the subordination of Art to some extraneous purpose of an impressive, exceptional character. Such a subordination has consisted – at various epochs of Art history – in the use to which Art was put to subserve commemorative, hieratic, generally religious, royal or patriotic functions. The object to be commemorated had to stand out from among other still existing objects or persons; the thing or the being to be worshipped had to be distinguished as markedly as possible from profaner objects of reverence and had to be invested with an air of sanctity by a removal from its ordinary context of occurrence. Nothing could have assisted more powerfully the introduction of a

high Distance than this attempt to differentiate objects of common experience in order to fit them for their exalted position. Curious, unusual things of nature met this tendency half-way and easily assumed divine rank; but others had to be distanced by an exaggeration of their size, by extraordinary attributes, by strange combinations of human and animal forms, by special insistence upon particular characteristics, or by the careful removal of all noticeably individualistic and concrete features. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast, for example, in Egyptian Art between the monumental, the works, and of the remarkable interpenetration of Art with the most ordinary routine of life, in order to realise the scarcely perceptible dividing line between the sphere of Art and the realm of practical existence. In a sense, the assertion that idealistic Art marks periods of a generally low and narrowly restricted culture is the converse to the oft-repeated statement that the flowering periods of Art coincide with epochs of decadence: for this so-called decadence represents indeed in certain respects a process of disintegration, politically, racially, often nationally, but a disruption necessary to the formation of larger social units and to the breakdown of outgrown national restrictions. For this very reason it has usually also been the sign of the growth of personal independence and of an expansion of individual culture.

To proceed to some more special points illustrating the distanced and therefore anti-realistic character of art, – both in subject-matter and in the form of presentation Art has always safeguarded its distanced view. Fanciful, even phantastic, subjects have from time immemorial been the accredited material of Art. No doubt things, as well as our view of them, have changed in the course of time: *Polyphemus* and the *Lotus-Eaters* for the Greeks, the *Venusberg* or the *Magnetic Mountain* for the Middle Ages were less incredible, more realistic than to us. But *Peter Pan* or *L'Oiseau Bleu* still appeal at the present day in spite of the prevailing note of realism of our time. 'Probability' and 'improbability' in Art are not to be measured by their correspondence (or lack of it) with actual experience. To do so had involved the theories of the 15th to the 18th centuries in endless contradictions. It is rather a matter of *consistency* of Distance. The note of realism, set by a work as a whole, determines *intrinsically* the

greater or smaller degree of fancy which it permits; and consequently we feel the loss of Peter Pan's shadow to be infinitely more probable than some trifling improbability which shocks our sense of proportion in a naturalistic work. No doubt also, fairy-tales, fairy-plays, stories of strange adventures were primarily invented to satisfy the craving of curiosity, the desire for the marvellous, the shudder of the unwonted and the longing for imaginary experiences. But by their mere eccentricity in regard to the normal facts of experience they cannot have failed to arouse a strong feeling of Distance.

Again, certain conventional subjects taken from mythical and legendary traditions, at first closely connected with the concrete, practical, life of a devout public, have gradually, by the mere force of convention as much as by their inherent anti-realism, acquired Distance for us to-day. Our view of Greek mythological sculpture, of early Christian saints and martyrs must be considerably distanced, compared with that of the Greek and medieval worshipper. It is in part the result of lapse of time, but in part also a real change of attitude. Already the outlook of the Imperial Roman had altered, and Pausanias shows a curious dualism of standpoint, declaring the Athene Lemnia to be the supreme achievement of Phidias's genius, and gazing awe-struck upon the roughly hewn tree-trunk representing some primitive Apollo. Our understanding of Greek tragedy suffers admittedly under our inability to revert to the point of view for which it was originally written. Even the tragedies of Racine demand an imaginative effort to put ourselves back into the courtly atmosphere of red-heeled, powdered ceremony. Provided the Distance is not too wide, the result of its intervention has everywhere been to enhance the *art*-character of such works and to lower their original ethical and social force of appeal. Thus in the central dome of the Church (Sta. Maria dei Miracoli) at Saronno are depicted the heavenly hosts in ascending tiers, crowned by the benevolent figure of the Divine Father, bending from the window of heaven to bestow His blessing upon the assembled community. The mere realism of foreshortening and of the boldest vertical perspective may well have made the naïve Christian of the 16th century conscious of the Divine Presence – but for us it has become a work of Art.

The unusual, exceptional, has found its especial home in tragedy. It has always – except in highly distanced tragedy – been a popular objection to it that 'there is enough sadness in life without going to the theatre for it.' Already Aristotle appears to have met with this view among his contemporaries clamouring for 'happy endings.' Yet tragedy is not sad; if it were, there would indeed be little sense in its existence. For the tragic is just in so far different from the merely sad, as it is distanced; and it is largely the exceptional which produces the Distance of tragedy: exceptional situations, exceptional characters, exceptional destinies and conduct. Not of course, characters merely cranky, eccentric, pathological. The exceptional element in tragic figures – that which makes them so utterly different from characters we meet with in ordinary experience – is a consistency of direction, a fervour of ideality, a persistence and driving-force which is far above the capacities of average men. The tragic of tragedy would, transposed into ordinary life, in nine cases out of ten, end in drama, in comedy, even in farce, for lack of steadfastness, for fear of conventions, for the dread of 'scenes,' for a hundred-and-one petty faithlessnesses towards a belief or an ideal: even if for none of these, it would end in a compromise simply because man forgets and time heals.⁵ Again, the sympathy, which aches with the sadness of tragedy is another such confusion, the under-distancing of tragedy's appeal. Tragedy trembles always on the knife-edge of a *personal* reaction, and sympathy which finds relief in tears tends almost always towards a loss of Distance. Such a loss naturally renders tragedy unpleasant to a degree: it becomes sad, dismal, harrowing, depressing. But real tragedy (melodrama has a very strong tendency to speculate upon sympathy), truly appreciated, is not sad. "The pity of it – oh, the pity of it," that essence of all genuine tragedy is not the pity of mild, regretful sympathy. It is a chaos of tearless, bitter bewilderment, of upsurging revolt and rapturous awe before the ruthless and inscrutable fate; it is the homage to the great and exceptional in the man who in a last effort of spiritual tension can rise to confront blind, crowning Necessity even in his crushing defeat.

As I explained earlier, the form of presentation sometimes endangers the maintenance of Distance, but it more frequently acts as a

considerable support. Thus the bodily vehicle of *drama* is the chief factor of risk to Distance. But, as if to counterbalance a confusion with nature, other features of stage-presentation exercise an opposite influence. Such are the general theatrical *milieu*, the shape and arrangement of the stage, the artificial lighting, the costumes, *mise-en-scène* and make-up, even the language, especially verse. Modern reforms of staging, aiming primarily at the removal of artistic incongruities between excessive decoration and the living figures of the actors and at the production of a more homogeneous stage-picture, inevitably work also towards a greater emphasis and homogeneity of Distance. The history of staging and dramaturgy is closely bound up with the evolution of Distance, and its fluctuations lie at the bottom not only of the greater part of all the talk and writing about 'dramatic probability' and the Aristotelian 'unities,' but also of 'theatrical illusion.' In *sculpture*, one distancing factor of presentment is its lack of colour. The aesthetic, or rather inaesthetic effect of realistic colouring, is in no way touched by the controversial question of its use historically; its attempted resuscitation, such as by Klinger, seems only to confirm its disadvantages. The distancing use even of pedestals, although originally no doubt serving other purposes, is evident to anyone who has experienced the oppressively crowded sensation of moving in a room among life-sized statues placed directly upon the floor. The circumstance that the space of statuary is the same space as ours (in distinction to relief sculpture or painting, for instance) renders a distancing by pedestals, i.e. a removal from our spatial context, imperative.⁶ Probably the framing of *pictures* might be shown to serve a similar purpose – though paintings have intrinsically a much greater Distance – because neither their space (perspective and imaginary space) nor their lighting coincides with our (actual) space or light, and the usual reduction in scale of the represented objects prevents a feeling of undue proximity. Besides, painting always retains to some extent a *two-dimensional* character, and this character supplies *eo ipso* a Distance. Nevertheless, life-size pictures, especially if they possess strong relief, and their light happens to coincide with the actual lighting, can occasionally produce the impression of actual presence which is a far from pleasant, though fortunately only a passing,

illusion. For decorative purposes, in pictorial renderings of vistas, garden-perspectives and architectural extensions, the removal of Distance has often been consciously striven after, whether with aesthetically satisfactory results is much disputed.

A general help towards Distance (and therefore with an anti-realistic feature) is to be found in the 'unification of presentment'⁷ of all art-objects. By unification of presentment are meant such qualities as symmetry, opposition, proportion, balance, rhythmical distribution of parts, light-arrangements, in fact all so-called 'formal' features, 'composition' in the widest sense. Unquestionably, Distance is not the only, nor even the principal function of composition; it serves to render our grasp of the presentation easier and to increase its intelligibility. It may even in itself constitute the principal aesthetic feature of the object, as in linear complexes or patterns, partly also in architectural designs. Yet, its distancing effect can hardly be underrated. For, every kind of visibly intentional arrangement or unification must, by the mere fact of its presence, enforce Distance, by distinguishing the object from the confused, disjointed and scattered forms of actual experience. This function can be gauged in a typical form in cases where composition produces an exceptionally marked impression of artificiality (not in the bad sense of that term, but in the sense in which all art is artificial); and it is a natural corollary to the differences of Distance in different arts and of different subjects, that the arts and subjects vary in the degree of artificiality which they can bear. It is this sense of artificial finish which is the source of so much of that elaborate charm of Byzantine work, of Mohammedan decoration, of the hieratic stiffness of so many primitive madonnas and saints. In general the emphasis of composition and technical finish increases with the Distance of the subject-matter: heroic conceptions lend themselves better to verse than to prose; monumental statues require a more general treatment, more elaboration of setting and artificiality of pose than impressionistic statuettes like those of Troubetzkoi; an ecclesiastic subject is painted with a degree of symmetrical arrangement which would be ridiculous in a Dutch interior, and a naturalistic drama carefully avoids the tableau impression characteristic of a mystery play. In a

similar manner the variations of Distance in the arts go hand in hand with a visibly greater predominance of composition and 'formal' elements, reaching a climax in architecture and music. It is again a matter of 'consistency of Distance.' At the same time, while from the point of view of the artist this is undoubtedly the case, from the point of view of the public the emphasis of composition and technical finish appears frequently to relieve the impression of highly distanced subjects by *diminishing the Distance of the whole*. The spectator has a tendency to see in composition and finish merely evidence of the artist's 'cleverness,' of his mastery over his material. Manual dexterity is an enviable thing to possess in everyone's experience, and naturally appeals to the public *practically*, thereby putting it into a directly personal relation to things which intrinsically have very little personal appeal for it. It is true that this function of composition is hardly an aesthetic one: for the admiration of mere technical cleverness is not an artistic enjoyment, but by a fortunate chance it has saved from oblivion and entire loss, among much rubbish, also much genuine Art, which otherwise would have completely lost contact with our life.

5. This discussion, necessarily sketchy and incomplete, may have helped to illustrate the sense in which, I suggested, Distance appears as a fundamental principle to which such antitheses as idealism and realism are reducible. The difference between 'idealistic' and 'realistic' Art is not a clear-cut dividing-line between the art-practices described by these terms, but is a difference of degree in the Distance-limit which they presuppose on the part both of the artist and of the public. A similar reconciliation seems to me possible between the opposite 'sensual' and 'spiritual,' 'individual' and 'typical.' That the appeal of Art is sensuous, even sensual, must be taken as an indisputable fact. Puritanism will never be persuaded, and rightly so, that this is not the case. The sensuousness of Art is a natural implication of the 'antinomy of Distance,' and will appear again in another connexion. The point of importance here is that the whole sensual side of Art is purified, spiritualised, 'filtered' as I expressed it earlier, by Distance. The most sensual appeal becomes the translucent veil of an underlying spirituality, once the grossly personal and practical elements have been removed from it. And – a

matter of special emphasis here – this *spiritual aspect of the appeal is the more penetrating, the more personal and direct its sensual appeal would have been* BUT FOR THE PRESENCE OF DISTANCE. For the artist, to trust in this delicate transmutation is a natural act of faith which the Puritan hesitates to venture upon: which of the two, one asks, is the greater idealist?

6. The same argument applies to the contradictory epithets 'individual' and 'typical.' A discussion in support of the fundamental individualism of Art lies outside the scope of this essay. Every artist has taken it for granted. Besides it is rather in the sense of 'concrete' or 'individualised,' that it is usually opposed to 'typical.' On the other hand, 'typical,' in the sense of 'abstract,' is as diametrically opposed to the whole nature of Art, as individualism is characteristic of it. It is in the sense of 'generalised' as a 'general human element' that it is claimed as a necessary ingredient in Art. This antithesis is again one which naturally and without mutual sacrifice finds room within the conception of Distance. Historically the 'typical' has had the effect of counteracting *under*-distancing as much as the 'individual' has opposed *over*-distancing. Naturally the two ingredients have constantly varied in the history of Art; they represent, in fact, two sets of conditions to which Art has invariably been subject: the personal and the social factors. It is Distance which on one side prevents the emptying of Art of its concreteness and the development of the typical into abstractness; which, on the other, suppresses the directly personal element of its individualism; thus reducing the antitheses to the peaceful interplay of these two factors. It is just this interplay which constitutes the "antinomy of Distance."

III

It remains to indicate the value of Distance as *an aesthetic principle*: as criterion in some of the standing problems of Aesthetics; as representing a phase of artistic creation; and as a characteristic feature of the 'aesthetic consciousness.'

1. The axiom of 'hedonistic Aesthetics' is that beauty is pleasure. Unfortunately for hedonism the formula is not reversible: not all pleasure is beauty. Hence the necessity of some

limiting criterion to separate the beautiful within the 'pleasure-field' from the merely agreeable. This relation of the beautiful to the agreeable is the ever recurring crux of all hedonistic Aesthetics, as the problem of this relation becomes inevitable when once the hedonistic basis is granted. It has provoked a number of widely different solutions, some manifestly wrong, and all as little satisfactory as the whole hedonistic groundwork upon which they rest: the shareableness of beauty as opposed to the 'monopoly' of the agreeable (Bain),⁸ the passivity of beauty-pleasure (Grant Allen),⁹ or most recently, the 'relative permanence of beauty-pleasure in revival' (H. R. Marshall).¹⁰

Distance offers a distinction which is as simple in its operation as it is fundamental in its importance: *the agreeable is a non-distanced pleasure*. Beauty in the widest sense of aesthetic value is impossible without the insertion of Distance. The agreeable stands in precisely the same relation to the beautiful (in its narrower sense) as the sad stands to the tragic, as indicated earlier. Translating the above formula, one may say, that the agreeable is felt as an affection of our concrete, practical self; the centre of gravity of an agreeable experience lies in the self which experiences the agreeable. The aesthetic experience, on the contrary, has its centre of gravity in itself or in the object mediating it, not in the self which has been distanced out of the field of the inner vision of the experiencer: "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end." It is for this reason that to be asked in the midst of an intense aesthetic impression "whether one likes it," is like a somnambulist being called by name: it is a recall to one's concrete self, an awakening of practical consciousness which throws the whole aesthetic mechanism out of gear. One might almost venture upon the paradox that the more intense the aesthetic absorption, the less one "likes," consciously, the experience. The failure to realise this fact, so fully borne out by all genuine artistic experience, is the fundamental error of hedonistic Aesthetics.

The problem of the relation of the beautiful and the agreeable has taken more definite shape in the question of the aesthetic value of the so-called 'lower senses' (comprising sensations of taste and temperature, muscular and tactile, and organic sensations). Sight and hearing have

always been the 'aesthetic senses' *par excellence*. Scent has been admitted to the status of an aesthetic sense by some, excluded by others. The ground for the rejection of the lower senses has always been that they mediate only agreeable sensations, but are incapable of conveying aesthetic experiences. Though true normally, this rigid distinction is theoretically unfair to the senses, and in practice often false. It is undoubtedly very difficult to reach an aesthetic appreciation through the lower senses, because the materialness of their action, their proximity and bodily connexion are great obstacles to their distancing. The aroma of coffee may be a kind of foretaste, taste etherialised, but still a taste. The sweetness of scent of a rose is usually felt more as a bodily caress than as an aesthetic experience. Yet poets have not hesitated to call the scents of flowers their "souls." Shelley has transformed the scent to an imperceptible sound.¹¹ We call such conceptions 'poetical': they mark the transition from the merely agreeable to the beautiful by means of Distance.

M. Guyau, in a well-known passage,¹² has described the same transformation of a taste. Even muscular sensations may present aesthetic possibilities, in the free exercise of bodily movement, the swing of a runner, in the ease and certainty of the trained gymnast; nay, such diffuse organic sensations as the buoyancy of well-being, and the elasticity of bodily energy, can, in privileged moments, be aesthetically enjoyed. That they admit of no material fixation, such as objects of sight and hearing do, and for that reason form no part of Art in the narrower sense; that they exist as aesthetic objects only for the moment and for the single being that enjoys them, is no argument against their aesthetic character. Mere material existence and permanence is no aesthetic criterion.

This is all the more true, as even among the experience of lasting things, such as are generally accounted to yield aesthetic impressions, the merely agreeable occurs as frequently as the beautiful.

To begin with the relatively simple case of colour-appreciation. Most people imagine that because they are not colour-blind, physically or spiritually, and prefer to live in a coloured world rather than in an engraving, they possess an aesthetic appreciation of colour as such. This is the sort of fallacy which hedonistic art-theories

produce, and the lack of an exchange of views on the subject only fosters. Everybody believes that he enjoys colour – and for that matter other things – just like anyone else. Yet rather the contrary is the case. By far the greater number, when asked why they like a colour, will answer, that they like it, because it strikes them as warm or cold, stimulating or soothing, heavy or light. They constitute a definite type of colour-appreciation and form about sixty per cent of all persons. The remainder assumes, for the greater part, a different attitude. Colours do not appeal to them as effects (largely organic) upon themselves. Their appreciation attributes to colours a kind of personality: colours are energetic, lively, serious, pensive, melancholic, affectionate, subtle, reserved, stealthy, treacherous, brutal, etc. These characters are not mere imaginings, left to the whim of the individual, romancing whatever he pleases into the colours, nor are they the work simply of accidental associations. They follow, on the contrary, definite rules in their applications; they are, in fact, the same organic effects as those of the former type, but transformed into, or interpreted as, attributes of the colour, instead of as affections of one's own self. In short, they are the result of the distancing of the organic effects: they form an aesthetic appreciation of colour, instead of a merely agreeable experience like those of the former kind.¹³

A similar parallelism of the agreeable and the beautiful (in the widest sense of aesthetic value) occurs also within the sphere of recognised art-forms. I select for special notice *comedy* and *melodrama* (though the same observation can be made in painting, architecture and notably in music), firstly as counterparts to tragedy, discussed earlier, secondly, because both represent admitted art-forms, in spite of their at least partially, inadequate claims to the distinction, and lastly because all these types, tragedy, comedy and melodrama, are usually grouped together as 'arts of the theatre' no less than as forms of 'literature.'

From the point of view of the present discussion, the case of *comedy* is particularly involved. What we mean by comedy as a class of theatrical entertainment covers several different kinds,¹⁴ which actually merge into each other and present historically a continuity which allows of no sharp lines of demarcation (a difficulty, by the way,

which besets all distinctions of literary or artistic *species*, as opposed to artistic *genera*). The second difficulty is that the 'laughable' includes much more than the comic of comedy. It may enter, in all its varieties of the ridiculous, silly, naïve, brilliant, especially as the humorous, into comedy as ingredients, but the comic is not coextensive with the laughable as a whole.

The fact to be noted here is, that the different types of comedy, as well as the different kinds of the laughable, presuppose different degrees of Distance. Their tendency is to have none at all. Both to laugh and to weep are direct expressions of a thoroughly practical nature, indicating almost always a concrete personal affection. Indeed, given suitable circumstances and adequate distancing-power, both can be distanced, but only with great difficulty; nor is it possible to decide which of the two offers the greater difficulty. The balance seems almost to incline in favour of tears as the easier of the two, and this would accord with the acknowledged difficulty of producing a really good comedy, or of maintaining a consistent aesthetic attitude in face of a comic situation. Certainly the tendency to *under-distance* is more felt in comedy even than in tragedy; most types of the former presenting a *non-distanced*, practical and personal appeal, which precisely implies that their enjoyment is generally hedonic, not aesthetic. In its lower forms comedy consequently is a mere amusement and falls as little under the heading of Art as pamphleteering would be considered as *belles-lettres*, or a burglary as a dramatic performance. It may be spiritualised, polished and refined to the sharpness of a dagger-point or the subtlety of foil-play, but there still clings to it an atmosphere of amusement pure and simple, sometimes of a rude, often of a cruel kind. This, together with the admitted preference of comedy for generalised types rather than for individualised figures, suggests the conclusion that its point of view is the survival of an attitude which the higher forms of Art have outgrown. It is noteworthy that this tendency decreases with every step towards high comedy, character-comedy and drama, with the growing spiritualisation of the comic elements and the first appearance of Distance. Historically the development has been slow and halting. There is no doubt that the 17th century considered the *Misanthrope* as amusing. We are nowadays less harsh and less

socially intolerant and *Alceste* appears to us no longer as frankly ridiculous. The supreme achievement of comedy is unquestionably that 'distanced ridicule' which we call *humour*. The self-contradiction of smiling at what we love, displays, in the light vein, that same perfect and subtle balance of the 'antinomy of Distance' which the truly tragic shows in the serious mood. The tragic and the humorous are the genuine aesthetic opposites; the tragic and the comic are contradictory in the matter of Distance, as aesthetic and hedonic objects respectively.

A similar hedonic opposition in the other direction is to be found between tragedy and *melodrama*. Whereas comedy tends to *underdistance*, melodrama suffers from *overdistancing*. For a cultivated audience its overcharged idealism, the crude opposition of vice and virtue, the exaggeration of its underlined moral, its innocence of *nuance*, and its sentimentality with violin-accompaniment are sufficient cause to stamp it as inferior Art. But perhaps its excessive distance is the least Distance obtainable by the public for which it is designed, and may be a great help to an unsophisticated audience in distancing the characters and events. For it is more than probable that we make a mistake in assuming an analogy between a cultivated audience at a serious drama, and a melodramatic audience. It is very likely that the lover of melodrama does not present that subtle balance of mind towards a play, implied in the 'antinomy of Distance.' His attitude is rather either that of a matter-of-fact adult or of a child: i.e. he is either in a frankly personal relation to the events of the play and would like to cudgel the villain who illtreats the innocent heroine, and rejoices loudly in his final defeat – just as he would in real life – or, he is completely lost in the excessive distance imposed by the work and watches naïvely the wonders he sees, as a child listens enchantedly to a fairy-tale. In neither case is his attitude aesthetic; in the one the object is *under-*, in the other *overdistanced*; in the former he confuses it with the reality he *knows* (or thinks he knows) to exist, in the other with a reality whose existence he does *not know, but accepts*. Neither bears the twofold character of the aesthetic state in which *we know* a thing *not* to exist, but *accept its existence*. From the point of view of moral advantage – in the absence of any aesthetic advantage – the former attitude might

seem preferable. But even this may be doubted; for if he believes what he sees in a great spectacular melodrama, every marble-lined hall of the most ordinary London hotel that he passes after the play must appear to him as a veritable Hell, and every man or woman in evening-dress as the devil incarnate. On either supposition, the moral effect must be deplorable in the extreme, and the melodrama is generally a much more fitting object of the censor's attention than any usually censored play. For in the one case the brutalising effect of the obtrusively visible wickedness cannot possibly be outweighed by any retaliatory poetic justice, which must seem to him singularly lacking in real life; in the other, the effect is purely negative and narcotic; in both his perspective of real life is hopelessly outfocussed and distorted.

2. The importance of Distance in artistic creation has already been briefly alluded to in connexion with the 'antinomy of Distance.'

Distancing might, indeed, well be considered as the especial and primary function of what is called the 'creative act' in artistic production: distancing is the *formal* aspect of creation in Art. The view that the artist 'copies nature' has already been dismissed. Since the 'imitation-of-nature' theory was officially discarded at the beginning of the 19th century, its place in popular fancy has been taken by the conception of the 'self-expression of the artist,' supported by the whole force of the Romantic Movement in Europe. Though true as a crude statement of the subjective origin of an artistic conception, though in many ways preferable to its predecessor and valuable as a corollary of such theories as that of the 'organic growth' of a work of Art, it is apt to lead to confusions and to one-sided inferences, to be found even in such deliberate and expert accounts of artistic production as that of Benedetto Croce.¹⁵ For, to start with, the 'self-expression' of an artist is not such as the 'self-expression' of a letter-writer or a public speaker: it is not the *direct* expression of the concrete personality of the artist; it is not even an *indirect* expression of his concrete personality, in the sense in which, for instance, Hamlet's 'self-expression' might be supposed to be the indirect reflexion of Shakespeare's ideas. Such a denial, it might be argued, runs counter to the observation that in the works of a literary artist, for example, are to be found

echoes and mirrorings of his times and of his personal experiences and convictions. But it is to be noted that to find these *is* in fact impossible, unless you previously know what reflexions to look for. Even in the relatively most direct transference from personal experience to their expression, viz. in lyrical poetry, such a connexion cannot be established backwards, though it is easy enough to prove it forwards: i.e. given the knowledge of the experiences, there is no difficulty in tracing their echoes, but it is impossible to infer biographical data of any detail or concrete value from an author's works alone. Otherwise Shakespeare's *Sonnets* would not have proved as refractory to biographical research as they have done, and endless blunders in literary history would never have been committed. What proves so impossible in literature, which after all offers an exceptionally adequate medium to 'self-expression,' is *a fortiori* out of question in other arts, in which there is not even an equivalence between the personal experiences and the material in which they are supposed to be formulated. The fundamental two-fold error of the 'self-expression' theory is to speak of 'expression' in the sense of 'intentional communication,' and to identify straightway the artist and the man. An intentional communication is as far almost from the mind of the true artist as it would be from that of the ordinary respectable citizen to walk about naked in the streets, and the idea has repeatedly been indignantly repudiated by artists. The second confusion is as misleading in its theoretical consequences, as it is mischievous and often exceedingly painful to the 'man' as well as to the 'artist.' The numberless instances in history of the astonishing difference, often the marked contrast between the *man* and his *work* is one of the most disconcerting riddles of Art, and should serve as a manifest warning against the popular illusion of finding the 'artist's mind' in his productions.¹⁶

Apart from the complication of technical necessities, of conventional art-forms, of the requirements of unification and composition, all impeding the direct transference of an actual mental content into its artistic formulation, there is the interpolation of Distance which stands between the artist's conception and the man's. For the 'artist' himself is already distanced from the concrete, historical personality, who ate and

drank and slept and did the ordinary business of life. No doubt here also are *degrees* of Distance, and the 'antinomy' applies to this case too. Some figures in literature and other arts are unquestionably self-portraits; but even self-portraits are not, and cannot be, the direct and faithful cast taken from the living soul. In short, so far from being 'self-expression,' *artistic production is the indirect formulation of a distanced mental content.*

I give a short illustration of this fact. A well-known dramatist described to me the process of production as taking place in his case in some such way as follows:

The starting-point of his production is what he described as an 'emotional idea,' i.e. some more or less general conception carrying with it a strong emotional tone. This idea may be suggested by an actual experience; anyhow the idea itself *is* an actual experience, i.e. it occurs within the range of his normal, practical being. Gradually it condenses itself into a situation made up of the interplay of certain characters, which may be of partly objective, partly imaginative descent. Then ensues what he described as a "life and death struggle" between the idea and the characters for existence: if the idea gains the upper hand, the conception of the whole is doomed. In the successful issue, on the contrary, the idea is, to use his phrase, "sucked up" by the characters as a sponge sucks up water, until no trace of the idea is left outside the characters. It is a process, which, he assured me, he is quite powerless to direct or even to influence. It is further of interest to notice that during this period the idea undergoes sometimes profound, often wholesale changes. Once the stage of complete fusion of the idea with the characters is reached, the conscious elaboration of the play can proceed. What follows after this, is of no further interest in this connexion.

This account tallies closely with the procedure which numerous dramatists are known to have followed. It forms a definite type. There are other types, equally well supported by evidence, which proceed along much less definite lines of a semi-logical development, but rather show sudden flash-like illuminations and much more subconscious growth.

The point to notice is the "life and death struggle" between the idea and the characters. As

I first remarked, the idea is the 'man's,' it is the reflexion of the dramatist's concrete and practical self. Yet this is precisely the part which must "die." The paradox of just the germ part of the whole being doomed, particularly impressed my informant as a kind of life-tragedy. The 'characters' on the other hand belong to the imaginary world, to the 'artist's.' Though they may be partially suggested by actuality, their full-grown development is divorced from it. This process of the 'idea' being "sucked up" by the characters and being destroyed by it, is a phase of artistic production technically known as the 'objectivation' of the conception. In it the 'man' dies and the 'artist' comes to life, and with him the work of Art. It is a change of death and birth in which there is no overlapping of the lives of parent and child. The result is the distanced finished production. As elsewhere, the distancing means the separation of personal affections, whether idea or complex experience, from the concrete personality of the experiencer, its filtering by the extrusion of its personal aspects, the throwing out of gear of its personal potency and significance.

The same transformation through distance is to be noticed in *acting*. Here, even more than in the other arts, a lingering bias in favour of the 'imitation of nature' theory has stood in the way of a correct interpretation of the facts. Yet acting supplies in this and other respects exceptionally valuable information, owing to its medium of expression and the overlapping – at least in part – of the process of producing with the finished production, which elsewhere are separated in point of time. It illustrates, as no other art can, the cleavage between the concrete, normal person and the distanced personality. [The acting here referred to is, of course, not that style which consists in 'walking on.' What is meant here is 'creative' acting, which in its turn must be distinguished from 'reproductive' acting – two different types traceable through the greater part of theatrical history, which in their highest development are often outwardly indistinguishable, but nevertheless retain traces of differences, characteristic of their procedures and psychical mechanism.] This cleavage between the two streams or layers of consciousness is so obvious that it has led to increasing speculation from the time when acting first attracted intelligent interest, since the middle of the 18th century. From the time of

Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* (itself only the last of a series of French studies) down to Mr. William Archer's *Masks or Faces* (1888) and the controversy between Coquelin and Salvini (in the nineties), theory has been at pains to grapple with this phenomenon. Explanations have differed widely, going from the one extreme of an identification of the acting and the normal personality to the other of a separation so wide as to be theoretically inconceivable and contradicted by experience. It is necessary to offer some conception which will account for the differences as well as for the indirect connexion between the two forms of being, and which is applicable not merely to acting, but to other kinds of art as well. Distance, it is here contended, meets the requirement even in its subtlest shades. To show this in detail lies outside the scope of this essay, and forms rather the task of a special treatment of the psychology of acting.

3. In the interest of those who may be familiar with the developments of aesthetic theories of late years, I should like to add that Distance has a special bearing upon many points raised by them. It is essential to the occurrence and working of 'empathy' (*Einfühlung*), and I mentioned earlier its connexion with Witasek's theory of *Scheingefühle* which forms part of his view on 'empathy.' The distinction between sympathy and 'empathy' as formulated by Lipps¹⁷ is a matter of the relative degree of Distance. Volkelt's¹⁸ suggestion of regarding the ordinary apprehension of expression (say of a person's face) as the first rudimentary stage of *Einfühlung*, leading subsequently to the lowering of our consciousness of reality ("*Herabsetzung des Wirklichkeitsgefühls*"), can similarly be formulated in terms of Distance. K. Lange's¹⁹ account of aesthetic experience in the form of 'illusion as conscious self-deception' appears to me a wrong formulation of the facts expressed by Distance. Lange's 'illusion' theory seems to me, among other things,²⁰ to be based upon a false opposition between Art and reality (nature) as the subject-matter of the former, whereas Distance does not imply any comparison between them in the act of experiencing and removes altogether the centre of gravity of the formula from the opposition.]

4. In this way Distance represents in aesthetic appreciation as well as in artistic

production a quality inherent in the impersonal, yet so intensely personal, relation which the human being entertains with Art, either as mere beholder or as producing artist.

It is Distance which makes the aesthetic object 'an end in itself.' It is that which raises Art beyond the narrow sphere of individual interest and imparts to it that 'postulating' character which the idealistic philosophy of the 19th century regarded as a metaphysical necessity. It renders questions of origin, of influences, or of purposes almost as meaningless as those of marketable value, of pleasure, even of moral importance, since it lifts the work of Art out of the realm of practical systems and ends.

In particular, it is Distance, which supplies one of the special criteria of aesthetic values as distinct from practical (utilitarian), scientific, or social (ethical) values. All these are concrete values, either *directly* personal as utilitarian, or *indirectly* remotely personal, as moral values. To speak, therefore, of the 'pleasure value' of Art, and to introduce hedonism into aesthetic speculation, is even more irrelevant than to speak of moral hedonism in Ethics. Aesthetic hedonism is a compromise. It is the attempt to reconcile for public use utilitarian ends with aesthetic values. Hedonism, as a practical, personal appeal has no place in the distanced appeal of Art. Moral hedonism is even more to the point than aesthetic hedonism, since ethical values, *quâ* social values, lie on the line of prolongation of utilitarian ends, sublimating indeed the *directly* personal object into the realm of socially or universally valuable ends, often demanding the sacrifice of individual happiness, but losing neither its *practical* nor even its *remotely personal* character.

In so far, Distance becomes one of the distinguishing features of the 'aesthetic consciousness,' of that special mentality or outlook upon experience and life, which, as I said at the outset, leads in its most pregnant and most fully developed form, both appreciatively and productively, to Art.

Notes

- 1 H. Witasek, 'Zur psychologischen Analyse der ästhetischen Einfühlung,' *Ztsch. für Psychol. u. Physiol. der Sinnesorg.* 1901, xxv. 1 ff.; *Grundzüge der Aesthetik*, Leipzig, 1904.

- 2 J. Volkelt, 'Die Bedeutung der niederen Empfindungen für die ästhetische Einfühlung,' *Ztsch. für Psychol. u. Physiol. der Sinnesorg.* xxxii. 15, 16; *System der Aesthetik*, 1905, i. 260 ff.
- 3 Report from the Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the Stage Plays (Censorship), 1909.
- 4 I shall use the term 'presentment' to denote the manner of presenting, in distinction to 'presentation' as that which is presented.
- 5 The famous 'unity of time,' so senseless as a 'canon,' is all the same often an indispensable condition of tragedy. For in many a tragedy the catastrophe would be even intrinsically impossible, if fatality did not overtake the hero with that rush which gives no time to forget and none to heal. It is in cases such as these that criticism has often blamed the work for 'improbability' – the old confusion between Art and nature – forgetting that the death of the hero is the convention of the art-form, as much as grouping in a picture is such a convention and that probability is not the correspondence with average experience, but consistency of Distance.
- 6 An instance which might be adduced to disprove this point only shows its correctness on closer inspection: for it was on purpose and with the intention of removing Distance, that Rodin originally intended his *citoyens de Calais* to be placed, without pedestals, upon the market-place of that town.
- 7 See note 2.
- 8 Bain, *The Emotions and the Will*, 2nd ed. 1850.
- 9 G. Allen, *Physiological Aesthetics*, 1897.
- 10 H. R. Marshall, *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics*, 1894; *Aesthetic Principles*, 1895.
- 11 Cf. "The Sensitive Plant."
- 12 M. Guyau, *Problèmes de l'Esthétique contemporaine*, Paris, 1847, 4^{me} ed. Livre i. chap. vi.
- 13 Cf. E. Bullough, 'The Perceptive Problem in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Single Colours,' [*British Journal of Psychology*], 1908, ii. 406ff.
- 14 Comedy embraces *satirical comedy*, i.e. dramatic invectives of all degrees of personal directness, from the attack on actually existing persons (such as is prohibited by the censorship, but has flourished everywhere) to skits upon existing professions, customs, evils, or society; secondly, *farce*, rarely unmixed with satire, but occasionally *pure* nonsense and horseplay; thirdly, *comedy proper*, a sublimation of farce into the pure comedy of general human situation, or genuine character-comedy, changing easily into the fourth class, the type of play described on the Continent as *drama* (in the narrower sense), i.e. a play involving serious situations, sometimes with tragic

prospects, but having an happy, if often unexpected, ending.

- 15 Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, translated by Douglas Ainslie, Macmillan, 1909.
- 16 Some well-known examples of this difference are, for instance: Mozart, Beethoven, Watteau, Murillo, Molière, Schiller, Verlasne, Zola.
- 17 Th. Lipps, *Asthetik*, Hamburg and Leipzig, 1903,

1.; 'Aesthetische Einfühlung,' *Ztsch. für Psychol. u. Physiol. der Sinnesorg.* xxii. 415 ff.

- 18 J. Volkelt, *System der Aesthetik*, 1905, i. 217 ff. and 488 ff.
- 19 K. Lange, *Des Wesen der Kunst*, 1901, 2 vols.
- 20 J. Segal, 'Die bewusste Selbsttäuschung als Kern des ästhetischen Genießens,' *Arch. f. d. ges. Psychol.* vi. 254 ff.

Art

Clive Bell

Clive Bell (1881–1964) was a highly influential critic of art and literature, who belonged to the celebrated Bloomsbury group, which included his sister-in-law, Virginia Woolf.

It is improbable that more nonsense has been written about aesthetics than about anything else: the literature of the subject is not large enough for that. It is certain, however, that about no subject with which I am acquainted has so little been said that is at all to the purpose. The explanation is discoverable. He who would elaborate a plausible theory of aesthetics must possess two qualities – artistic sensibility and a turn for clear thinking. Without sensibility a man can have no aesthetic experience, and, obviously, theories not based on broad and deep aesthetic experience are worthless. Only those for whom art is a constant source of passionate emotion can possess the data from which profitable theories may be deduced; but to deduce profitable theories even from accurate data involves a certain amount of brain-work, and, unfortunately, robust intellects and delicate sensibilities are not inseparable. As often as not, the hardest thinkers have had no aesthetic experience whatever. I have a friend blessed with an intellect as keen as a drill, who, though he takes an interest in aesthetics, has never during a

life of almost forty years been guilty of an aesthetic emotion. So, having no faculty for distinguishing a work of art from a handsaw, he is apt to rear up a pyramid of irrefragable argument on the hypothesis that a handsaw is a work of art. This defect robs his perspicuous and subtle reasoning of much of its value; for it has ever been a maxim that faultless logic can win but little credit for conclusions that are based on premises notoriously false. Every cloud, however, has its silver lining, and this insensibility, though unlucky in that it makes my friend incapable of choosing a sound basis for his argument, mercifully blinds him to the absurdity of his conclusions while leaving him in full enjoyment of his masterly dialectic. People who set out from the hypothesis that Sir Edwin Landseer was the finest painter that ever lived will feel no uneasiness about an aesthetic which proves that Giotto was the worst. So, my friend, when he arrives very logically at the conclusion that a work of art should be small or round or smooth, or that to appreciate fully a picture you should pace smartly before it or set it spinning like a top, cannot guess why I ask him whether he has lately been to Cambridge, a place he sometimes visits.

On the other hand, people who respond immediately and surely to works of art, though, in my judgment, more enviable than men of

massive intellect but slight sensibility, are often quite as incapable of talking sense about aesthetics. Their heads are not always very clear. They possess the data on which any system must be based; but, generally, they want the power that draws correct inferences from true data. Having received aesthetic emotions from works of art, they are in a position to seek out the quality common to all that have moved them, but, in fact, they do nothing of the sort. I do not blame them. Why should they bother to examine their feelings when for them to feel is enough? Why should they stop to think when they are not very good at thinking? Why should they hunt for a common quality in all objects that move them in a particular way when they can linger over the many delicious and peculiar charms of each as it comes? So, if they write criticism and call it aesthetics, if they imagine that they are talking about Art when they are talking about particular works of art or even about the technique of painting, if, loving particular works they find tedious the consideration of art in general, perhaps they have chosen the better part. If they are not curious about the nature of their emotion, nor about the quality common to all objects that provoke it, they have my sympathy, and, as what they say is often charming and suggestive, my admiration too. Only let no one suppose that what they write and talk is aesthetics; it is criticism, or just "shop."

The starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art. All sensitive people agree that there is a peculiar emotion provoked by works of art. I do not mean, of course, that all works provoke the same emotion. On the contrary, every work produces a different emotion. But all these emotions are recognisably the same in kind; so far, at any rate, the best opinion is on my side. That there is a particular kind of emotion provoked by works of visual art, and that this emotion is provoked by every kind of visual art, by pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings, textiles, &c., &c., is not disputed, I think, by anyone capable of feeling it. This emotion is called the aesthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of aesthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of

art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from all other classes of objects.

For either all works of visual art have some common quality, or when we speak of "works of art" we gibber. Everyone speaks of "art," making a mental classification by which he distinguishes the class "works of art" from all other classes. What is the justification of this classification? What is the quality common and peculiar to all members of this class? Whatever it be, no doubt it is often found in company with other qualities; but they are adventitious – it is essential. There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist; possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions? What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cézanne? Only one answer seems possible – significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.

At this point it may be objected that I am making aesthetics a purely subjective business, since my only data are personal experiences of a particular emotion. It will be said that the objects that provoke this emotion vary with each individual, and that therefore a system of aesthetics can have no objective validity. It must be replied that any system of aesthetics which pretends to be based on some objective truth is so palpably ridiculous as not to be worth discussing. We have no other means of recognising a work of art than our feeling for it. The objects that provoke aesthetic emotion vary with each individual. Aesthetic judgments are, as the saying goes, matters of taste; and about tastes, as everyone is proud to admit, there is no disputing. A good critic may be able to make me see in a picture that had left me cold things that I had overlooked, till at last, receiving the aesthetic emotion, I recognise it as a work of art. To be continually pointing out those parts, the sum, or rather the combination, of which unite to produce significant form, is the function of criticism. But it is useless for a critic to tell me

that something is a work of art; he must make me feel it for myself. This he can do only by making me see; he must get at my emotions through my eyes. Unless he can make me see something that moves me, he cannot force my emotions. I have no right to consider anything a work of art to which I cannot react emotionally; and I have no right to look for the essential quality in anything that I have not *felt* to be a work of art. The critic can affect my aesthetic theories only by affecting my aesthetic experience. All systems of aesthetics must be based on personal experience – that is to say, they must be subjective.

Yet, though all aesthetic theories must be based on aesthetic judgments, and ultimately all aesthetic judgments must be matters of personal taste, it would be rash to assert that no theory of aesthetics can have general validity. For, though A, B, C, D are the works that move me, and A, D, E, F the works that move you, it may well be that *x* is the only quality believed by either of us to be common to all the works in his list. We may all agree about aesthetics, and yet differ about particular works of art. We may differ as to the presence or absence of the quality *x*. My immediate object will be to show that significant form is the only quality common and peculiar to all the works of visual art that move me; and I will ask those whose aesthetic experience does not tally with mine to see whether this quality is not also, in their judgment, common to all works that move them, and whether they can discover any other quality of which the same can be said.

Also at this point a query arises, irrelevant indeed, but hardly to be suppressed: “Why are we so profoundly moved by forms related in a particular way?” The question is extremely interesting, but irrelevant to aesthetics. In pure aesthetics we have only to consider our emotion and its object: for the purposes of aesthetics we have no right, neither is there any necessity, to pry behind the object into the state of mind of him who made it. Later, I shall attempt to answer the question; for by so doing I may be able to develop my theory of the relation of art to life. I shall not, however, be under the delusion that I am rounding off my theory of aesthetics. For a discussion of aesthetics, it need be agreed only that forms arranged and combined according to certain unknown and mysterious laws do move us in a particular way, and that it is the business of an artist so to combine and arrange them that they

shall move us. These moving combinations and arrangements I have called, for the sake of convenience and for a reason that will appear later, “Significant Form.”

A third interruption has to be met.

“Are you forgetting about colour?” someone inquires. Certainly not; my term “significant form” included combinations of lines and of colours. The distinction between form and colour is an unreal one; you cannot conceive a colourless line or a colourless space; neither can you conceive a formless relation of colours. In a black and white drawing the spaces are all white and all are bounded by black lines; in most oil paintings the spaces are multi-coloured and so are the boundaries; you cannot imagine a boundary line without any content, or a content without a boundary line. Therefore, when I speak of significant form, I mean a combination of lines and colours (counting white and black as colours) that moves me aesthetically.

Some people may be surprised at my not having called this “beauty.” Of course, to those who define beauty as “combinations of lines and colours that provoke aesthetic emotion,” I willingly concede the right of substituting their word for mine. But most of us, however strict we may be, are apt to apply the epithet “beautiful” to objects that do not provoke that peculiar emotion produced by works of art. Everyone, I suspect, has called a butterfly or a flower beautiful. Does anyone feel the same kind of emotion for a butterfly or a flower that he feels for a cathedral or a picture? Surely, it is not what I call an aesthetic emotion that most of us feel, generally, for natural beauty. I shall suggest, later, that some people may, occasionally, see in nature what we see in art, and feel for her an aesthetic emotion; but I am satisfied that, as a rule, most people feel a very different kind of emotion for birds and flowers and the wings of butterflies from that which they feel for pictures, pots, temples and statues. Why these beautiful things do not move us as works of art move is another, and not an aesthetic, question. For our immediate purpose we have to discover only what quality is common to objects that do move us as works of art. In the last part of this chapter, when I try to answer the question – “Why are we so profoundly moved by some combinations of lines and colours?” I shall hope to offer an acceptable explanation of why we are less profoundly moved by others.

Since we call a quality that does not raise the characteristic aesthetic emotion "Beauty," it would be misleading to call by the same name the quality that does. To make "beauty" the object of the aesthetic emotion, we must give to the word an over-strict and unfamiliar definition. Everyone sometimes uses "beauty" in an unaesthetic sense; most people habitually do so. To everyone, except perhaps here and there an occasional aesthete, the commonest sense of the word is unaesthetic. Of its grosser abuse, patent in our chatter about "beautiful huntin'" and "beautiful shootin'," I need not take account; it would be open to the precious to reply that they never do so abuse it. Besides, here there is no danger of confusion between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic use; but when we speak of a beautiful woman there is. When an ordinary man speaks of a beautiful woman he certainly does not mean only that she moves him aesthetically; but when an artist calls a withered old hag beautiful he may sometimes mean what he means when he calls a battered torso beautiful. The ordinary man, if he be also a man of taste, will call the battered torso beautiful, but he will not call a withered hag beautiful because, in the matter of women, it is not to the aesthetic quality that the hag may possess, but to some other quality that he assigns the epithet. Indeed, most of us never dream of going for aesthetic emotions to human beings, from whom we ask something very different. This "something," when we find it in a young woman, we are apt to call "beauty." We live in a nice age. With the man-in-the-street "beautiful" is more often than not synonymous with "desirable"; the word does not necessarily connote any aesthetic reaction whatever, and I am tempted to believe that in the minds of many the sexual flavour of the word is stronger than the aesthetic. I have noticed a consistency in those to whom the most beautiful thing in the world is a beautiful woman, and the next most beautiful thing a picture of one. The confusion between aesthetic and sensual beauty is not in their case so great as might be supposed. Perhaps there is none; for perhaps they have never had an aesthetic emotion to confuse with their other emotions. The art that they call "beautiful" is generally closely related to the women. A beautiful picture is a photograph of a pretty girl; beautiful music, the music that provokes emotions similar to those provoked by

young ladies in musical farces; and beautiful poetry, the poetry that recalls the same emotions felt, twenty years earlier, for the rector's daughter. Clearly the word "beauty" is used to connote the objects of quite distinguishable emotions, and that is a reason for not employing a term which would land me inevitably in confusions and misunderstandings with my readers.

On the other hand, with those who judge it more exact to call these combinations and arrangements of form that provoke our aesthetic emotions, not "significant form," but "significant relations of form," and then try to make the best of two worlds, the aesthetic and the metaphysical, by calling these relations "rhythm," I have no quarrel whatever. Having made it clear that by "significant form" I mean arrangements and combinations that move us in a particular way, I willingly join hands with those who prefer to give a different name to the same thing.

The hypothesis that significant form is the essential quality in a work of art has at least one merit denied to many more famous and more striking – it does help to explain things. We are all familiar with pictures that interest us and excite our admiration, but do not move us as works of art. To this class belongs what I call "Descriptive Painting" – that is, painting in which forms are used not as objects of emotion, but as means of suggesting emotion or conveying information. Portraits of psychological and historical value, topographical works, pictures that tell stories and suggest situations, illustrations of all sorts, belong to this class. That we all recognise the distinction is clear, for who has not said that such and such a drawing was excellent as illustration, but as a work of art worthless? Of course many descriptive pictures possess, amongst other qualities, formal significance, and are therefore works of art: but many more do not. They interest us; they may move us too in a hundred different ways, but they do not move us aesthetically. According to my hypothesis they are not works of art. They leave untouched our aesthetic emotions because it is not their forms but the ideas or information suggested or conveyed by their forms that affect us.

Few pictures are better known or liked than Frith's "Paddington Station"; certainly I should be the last to grudge it its popularity. Many a weary forty minutes have I whiled away disentan-

gling its fascinating incidents and forging for each an imaginary past and an improbable future. But certain though it is that Frith's masterpiece, or engravings of it, have provided thousands with half-hours of curious and fanciful pleasure, it is not less certain that no one has experienced before it one half-second of aesthetic rapture – and this although the picture contains several pretty passages of colour, and is by no means badly painted. "Paddington Station" is not a work of art; it is an interesting and amusing document. In its line and colour are used to recount anecdotes, suggest ideas, and indicate the manners and customs of an age: they are not used to provoke aesthetic emotion. Forms and the relations of forms were for Frith not objects of emotion, but means of suggesting emotion and conveying ideas.

The ideas and information conveyed by "Paddington Station" are so amusing and so well presented that the picture has considerable value and is well worth preserving. But, with the perfection of photographic processes and of the cinematograph, pictures of this sort are becoming otiose. Who doubts that one of those *Daily Mirror* photographers in collaboration with a *Daily Mail* reporter can tell us far more about "London day by day" than any Royal Academician? For an account of manners and fashions we shall go, in future, to photographs, supported by a little bright journalism, rather than to descriptive painting. Had the imperial academicians of Nero, instead of manufacturing incredibly loathsome imitations of the antique, recorded in fresco and mosaic the manners and fashions of their day, their stuff, though artistic rubbish, would now be an historical gold-mine. If only they had been Friths instead of being Alma Tademas! But photography has made impossible any such transmutation of modern rubbish. Therefore it must be confessed that pictures in the Frith tradition are grown superfluous; they merely waste the hours of able men who might be more profitably employed in works of a wider beneficence. Still, they are not unpleasant, which is more than can be said for that kind of descriptive painting of which "The Doctor" is the most flagrant example. Of course "The Doctor" is not a work of art. In its form is not used as an object of emotion, but as a means of suggesting emotions. This alone suffices to make it nugatory; it is worse than

nugatory because the emotion it suggests is false. What it suggests is not pity and admiration but a sense of complacency in our own pitifulness and generosity. It is sentimental. Art is above morals, or, rather, all art is moral because, as I hope to show presently, works of art are immediate means to good. Once we have judged a thing a work of art, we have judged it ethically of the first importance and put it beyond the reach of the moralist. But descriptive pictures which are not works of art, and, therefore, are not necessarily means to good states of mind, are proper objects of the ethical philosopher's attention. Not being a work of art, "The Doctor" has none of the immense ethical value possessed by all objects that provoke aesthetic ecstasy; and the state of mind to which it is a means, as illustration, appears to me undesirable.

The works of those enterprising young men, the Italian Futurists, are notable examples of descriptive painting. Like the Royal Academicians, they use form, not to provoke aesthetic emotions, but to convey information and ideas. Indeed, the published theories of the Futurists prove that their pictures ought to have nothing whatever to do with art. Their social and political theories are respectable, but I would suggest to young Italian painters that it is possible to become a Futurist in thought and action and yet remain an artist, if one has the luck to be born one. To associate art with politics is always a mistake. Futurist pictures are descriptive because they aim at presenting in line and colour the chaos of the mind at a particular moment; their forms are not intended to promote aesthetic emotion but to convey information. These forms, by the way, whatever may be the nature of the ideas they suggest, are themselves anything but revolutionary. In such Futurist pictures as I have seen – perhaps I should except some by Severini – the drawing, whenever it becomes representative as it frequently does, is found to be in that soft and common convention brought into fashion by Besnard some thirty years ago, and much affected by Beaux-Art students ever since. As works of art, the Futurist pictures are negligible; but they are not to be judged as works of art. A good Futurist picture would succeed as a good piece of psychology succeeds; it would reveal, through line and colour, the complexities of an interesting state of mind. If Futurist pictures seem to fail, we must

seek an explanation, not in a lack of artistic qualities that they never were intended to possess, but rather in the minds the states of which they are intended to reveal.

Most people who care much about art find that of the work that moves them most the greater part is what scholars call "Primitive." Of course there are bad primitives. For instance, I remember going, full of enthusiasm, to see one of the earliest Romanesque churches in Poitiers (Notre-Dame-la-Grande), and finding it as ill-proportioned, over-decorated, coarse, fat and heavy as any better class building by one of those highly civilised architects who flourished a thousand years earlier or eight hundred later. But such exceptions are rare. As a rule primitive art is good – and here again my hypothesis is helpful – for, as a rule, it is also free from descriptive qualities. In primitive art you will find no accurate representation; you will find only significant form. Yet no other art moves us so profoundly. Whether we consider Sumerian sculpture or pre-dynastic Egyptian art, or archaic Greek, or the Wei and T'ang masterpieces, or those early Japanese works of which I had the luck to see a few superb examples (especially two wooden Bodhisattvas) at the Shepherd's Bush Exhibition in 1910, or whether, coming nearer home, we consider the primitive Byzantine art of the sixth century and its primitive developments amongst the Western barbarians, or, turning far afield, we consider that mysterious and majestic art that flourished in Central and South America before the coming of the white men, in every case we observe three common characteristics – absence of representation, absence of technical swagger, sublimely impressive form. Nor is it hard to discover the connection between these three. Formal significance loses itself in preoccupation with exact representation and ostentatious cunning.

Naturally, it is said that if there is little representation and less saltimbancery in primitive art, that is because the primitives were unable to catch a likeness or cut intellectual capers. The contention is beside the point. There is truth in it, no doubt, though, were I a critic whose reputation depended on a power of impressing the public with a semblance of knowledge, I should be more cautious about urging it than such people generally are. For to suppose that the Byzantine masters wanted skill, or could not have

created an illusion had they wished to do so, seems to imply ignorance of the amazingly dexterous realism of the notoriously bad works of that age. Very often, I fear, the misrepresentation of the primitives must be attributed to what the critics call, "wilful distortion." Be that as it may, the point is that, either from want of skill or want of will, primitives neither create illusions, nor make display of extravagant accomplishment, but concentrate their energies on the one thing needful – the creation of form. Thus have they created the finest works of art that we possess.

Let no one imagine that representation is bad in itself; a realistic form may be as significant, in its place as part of the design, as an abstract. But if a representative form has value, it is as form, not as representation. The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life. The pure mathematician rapt in his studies knows a state of mind which I take to be similar, if not identical. He feels an emotion for his speculations which arises from no perceived relation between them and the lives of men, but springs, inhuman or super-human, from the heart of an abstract science. I wonder, sometimes, whether the appreciators of art and of mathematical solutions are not even more closely allied. Before we feel an aesthetic emotion for a combination of forms, do we not perceive intellectually the rightness and necessity of the combination? If we do, it would explain the fact that passing rapidly through a room we recognise a picture to be good, although we cannot say that it has provoked much emotion. We seem to have recognised intellectually the rightness of its forms without staying to fix our attention, and collect, as it were, their emotional significance. If this were so, it would be permissible to inquire whether it was the forms themselves or our perception of their rightness and necessity that caused aesthetic emotion. But I do not think I need linger to discuss the matter here. I have been inquiring why certain combinations of forms move us; I should not have travelled by

other roads had I enquired, instead, why certain combinations are perceived to be right and necessary, and why our perception of their rightness and necessity is moving. What I have to say is this: the rapt philosopher, and he who contemplates a work of art, inhabit a world with an intense and peculiar significance of its own; that significance is unrelated to the significance of life. In this world the emotions of life find no place. It is a world with emotions of its own.

To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space. That bit of knowledge, I admit, is essential to the appreciation of many great works, since many of the most moving forms ever created are in three dimensions. To see a cube or a rhomboid as a flat pattern is to lower its significance, and a sense of three-dimensional space is essential to the full appreciation of most architectural forms. Pictures which would be insignificant if we saw them as flat patterns are profoundly moving because, in fact, we see them as related planes. If the representation of three-dimensional space is to be called "representation," then I agree that there is one kind of representation which is not irrelevant. Also, I agree that along with our feeling for line and colour we must bring with us our knowledge of space if we are to make the most of every kind of form. Nevertheless, there are magnificent designs to an appreciation of which this knowledge is not necessary: so, though it is not irrelevant to the appreciation of some works of art it is not essential to the appreciation of all. What we must say is that the representation of three-dimensional space is neither irrelevant nor essential to all art, and that every other sort of representation is irrelevant.

That there is an irrelevant representative or descriptive element in many great works of art is not in the least surprising. Why it is not surprising I shall try to show elsewhere. Representation is not of necessity baneful, and highly realistic forms may be extremely significant. Very often, however, representation is a sign of weakness in an artist. A painter too feeble to create forms that provoke more than a little aesthetic emotion will try to eke that little out by suggesting the emotions of life. To evoke the emotions of life he must use representation. Thus a man will paint an execution, and, fearing to miss with his first barrel of sig-

nificant form, will try to hit with his second by raising an emotion of fear or pity. But if in the artist an inclination to play upon the emotions of life is often the sign of a flickering inspiration, in the spectator a tendency to seek, behind form, the emotions of life is a sign of defective sensibility always. It means that his aesthetic emotions are weak or, at any rate, imperfect. Before a work of art people who feel little or no emotion for pure form find themselves at a loss. They are deaf men at a concert. They know that they are in the presence of something great, but they lack the power of apprehending it. They know that they ought to feel for it a tremendous emotion, but it happens that the particular kind of emotion it can raise is one that they can feel hardly or not at all. And so they read into the forms of the work those facts and ideas for which they are capable of feeling emotion, and feel for them the emotions that they can feel – the ordinary emotions of life. When confronted by a picture, instinctively they refer back its forms to the world from which they came. They treat created form as though it were imitated form, a picture as though it were a photograph. Instead of going out on the stream of art into a new world of aesthetic experience, they turn a sharp corner and come straight home to the world of human interests. For them the significance of a work of art depends on what they bring to it; no new thing is added to their lives, only the old material is stirred. A good work of visual art carries a person who is capable of appreciating it out of life into ecstasy: to use art as a means to the emotions of life is to use a telescope for reading the news. You will notice that people who cannot feel pure aesthetic emotions remember pictures by their subjects; whereas people who can, as often as not, have no idea what the subject of a picture is. They have never noticed the representative element, and so when they discuss pictures they talk about the shapes of forms and the relations and quantities of colours. Often they can tell by the quality of a single line whether or no a man is a good artist. They are concerned only with lines and colours, their relations and quantities and qualities; but from these they win an emotion more profound and far more sublime than any that can be given by the description of facts and ideas.

This last sentence has a very confident ring – over-confident, some may think. Perhaps I shall

be able to justify it, and make my meaning clearer too, if I give an account of my own feelings about music. I am not really musical. I do not understand music well. I find musical form exceedingly difficult to apprehend, and I am sure that the profounder subtleties of harmony and rhythm more often than not escape me. The form of a musical composition must be simple indeed if I am to grasp it honestly. My opinion about music is not worth having. Yet, sometimes, at a concert, though my appreciation of the music is limited and humble, it is pure. Sometimes, though I have poor understanding, I have a clean palate. Consequently, when I am feeling bright and clear and intent, at the beginning of a concert for instance, when something that I can grasp is being played, I get from music that pure aesthetic emotion that I get from visual art. It is less intense, and the rapture is evanescent; I understand music too ill for music to transport me far into the world of pure aesthetic ecstasy. But at moments I do appreciate music as pure musical form, as sounds combined according to the laws of a mysterious necessity, as pure art with a tremendous significance of its own and no relation whatever to the significance of life; and in those moments I lose myself in that infinitely sublime state of mind to which pure visual form transports me. How inferior is my normal state of mind at a concert. Tired or perplexed, I let slip my sense of form, my aesthetic emotion collapses, and I begin weaving into the harmonies, that I cannot grasp, the ideas of life. Incapable of feeling the austere emotions of art, I begin to read into the musical forms human emotions of terror and mystery, love and hate, and spend the minutes, pleasantly enough, in a world of turbid and inferior feeling. At such times, were the grossest pieces of onomatopoeic representation – the song of a bird, the galloping of horses, the cries of children, or the laughing of demons – to be introduced into the symphony, I should not be offended. Very likely I should be pleased; they would afford new points of departure for new trains of romantic feeling or heroic thought. I know very well what has happened. I have been using art as a means to the emotions of life and reading into it the ideas of life. I have been cutting blocks with a razor. I have tumbled from the superb peaks of aesthetic exaltation to the snug foothills of warm humanity. It is a jolly country. No one need be ashamed

of enjoying himself there. Only no one who has ever been on the heights can help feeling a little crestfallen in the cosy valleys. And let no one imagine, because he has made merry in the warm tilth and quaint nooks of romance, that he can even guess at the austere and thrilling raptures of those who have climbed the cold, white peaks of art.

About music most people are as willing to be humble as I am. If they cannot grasp musical form and win from it a pure aesthetic emotion, they confess that they understand music imperfectly or not at all. They recognise quite clearly that there is a difference between the feeling of the musician for pure music and that of the cheerful concert-goer for what music suggests. The latter enjoys his own emotions, as he has every right to do, and recognises their inferiority. Unfortunately, people are apt to be less modest about their powers of appreciating visual art. Everyone is inclined to believe that out of pictures, at any rate, he can get all that there is to be got; everyone is ready to cry “humbug” and “impostor” at those who say that more can be had. The good faith of people who feel pure aesthetic emotions is called in question by those who have never felt anything of the sort. It is the prevalence of the representative element, I suppose, that makes the man in the street so sure that he knows a good picture when he sees one. For I have noticed that in matters of architecture, pottery, textiles, &c., ignorance and ineptitude are more willing to defer to the opinions of those who have been blest with peculiar sensibility. It is a pity that cultivated and intelligent men and women cannot be induced to believe that a great gift of aesthetic appreciation is at least as rare in visual as in musical art. A comparison of my own experience in both has enabled me to discriminate very clearly between pure and impure appreciation. Is it too much to ask that others should be as honest about their feelings for pictures as I have been about mine for music? For I am certain that most of those who visit galleries do feel very much what I feel at concerts. They have their moments of pure ecstasy; but the moments are short and unsure. Soon they fall back into the world of human interests and feel emotions, good no doubt, but inferior. I do not dream of saying that what they get from art is bad or nugatory; I say that they do not get the best that art can give.

I do not say that they cannot understand art; rather I say that they cannot understand the state of mind of those who understand it best. I do not say that art means nothing or little to them; I say they miss its full significance. I do not suggest for one moment that their appreciation of art is a thing to be ashamed of; the majority of the charming and intelligent people with whom I am acquainted appreciate visual art impurely; and, by the way, the appreciation of almost all great writers has been impure. But provided that there be some fraction of pure aesthetic emotion, even a mixed and minor appreciation of art is, I am sure, one of the most valuable things in the world – so valuable, indeed, that in my giddier moments I have been tempted to believe that art might prove the world's salvation.

Yet, though the echoes and shadows of art enrich the life of the plains, her spirit dwells on the mountains. To him who woos, but woos impurely, she returns enriched what is brought. Like the sun, she warms the good seed in good soil and causes it to bring forth good fruit. But only to the perfect lover does she give a new strange gift – a gift beyond all price. Imperfect lovers bring to art and take away the ideas and emotions of their own age and civilisation. In twelfth-century Europe a man might have been greatly moved by a Romanesque church and found nothing in a T'ang picture. To a man of a later age, Greek sculpture meant much and

Mexican nothing, for only to the former could he bring a crowd of associated ideas to be the objects of familiar emotions. But the perfect lover, he who can feel the profound significance of form, is raised above the accidents of time and place. To him the problems of archaeology, history, and hagiography are impertinent. If the forms of a work are significant its provenance is irrelevant. Before the grandeur of those Sumerian figures in the Louvre he is carried on the same flood of emotion to the same aesthetic ecstasy as, more than four thousand years ago, the Chaldean lover was carried. It is the mark of great art that its appeal is universal and eternal. Significant form stands charged with the power to provoke aesthetic emotion in anyone capable of feeling it. The ideas of men go buzz and die like gnats; men change their institutions and their customs as they change their coats; the intellectual triumphs of one age are the follies of another; only great art remains stable and unobscure. Great art remains stable and unobscure because the feelings that it awakens are independent of time and place, because its kingdom is not of this world. To those who have and hold a sense of the significance of form what does it matter whether the forms that move them were created in Paris the day before yesterday or in Babylon fifty centuries ago? The forms of art are inexhaustible; but all lead by the same road of aesthetic emotion to the same world of aesthetic ecstasy.

The Principles of Art

R.G. Collingwood

Robin George Collingwood (1889–1943), an Englishman who was a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford as well as a noted historian of Rome, developed provocative views on the nature of art that drew on the work of Benedetto Croce.

Introduction

1 The two conditions of an aesthetic theory

The business of this book is to answer the question: What is art?

A question of this kind has to be answered in two stages. First, we must make sure that the key word (in this case 'art') is a word which we know how to apply where it ought to be applied and refuse where it ought to be refused. It would not be much use beginning to argue about the correct definition of a general term whose instances we could not recognize when we saw them. Our first business, then, is to bring ourselves into a position in which we can say with confidence 'this and this and this are art; that and that and that are not art'. [. . .]

Secondly, we must proceed to a definition of the term 'art'. This comes second, and not first, because no one can even try to define a term until he has settled in his own mind a definite usage of it: no one can define a term in common use until

he has satisfied himself that his personal usage of it harmonizes with the common usage. Definition necessarily means defining one thing in terms of something else; therefore, in order to define any given thing, one must have in one's head not only a clear idea of the thing to be defined, but an equally clear idea of all the other things by reference to which one defines it. People often go wrong over this. They think that in order to construct a definition or (what is the same thing) a 'theory' of something, it is enough to have a clear idea of that one thing. That is absurd. Having a clear idea of the thing enables them to recognize it when they see it, just as having a clear idea of a certain house enables them to recognize it when they are there; but defining the thing is like explaining where the house is or pointing out its position on the map; you must know its relations to other things as well, and if your ideas of these other things are vague, your definition will be worthless. [. . .]

4 History of the word 'art'

In order to clear up the ambiguities attaching to the word 'art', we must look to its history. The aesthetic sense of the word, the sense which here concerns us, is very recent in origin. *Ars* in

ancient Latin, like τέχνη [technē] in Greek, means something quite different. It means a craft or specialized form of skill, like carpentry or smithing or surgery. The Greeks and Romans had no conception of what we call art as something different from craft; what we call art they regarded merely as a group of crafts, such as the craft of poetry (ποιητική τέχνη, *ars poetica*), which they conceived, sometimes no doubt with misgivings, as in principle just like carpentry and the rest, and differing from any one of these only in the sort of way in which any one of them differs from any other.

It is difficult for us to realize this fact, and still more so to realize its implications. If people have no word for a certain kind of thing, it is because they are not aware of it as a distinct kind. Admiring as we do the art of the ancient Greeks, we naturally suppose that they admired it in the same kind of spirit as ourselves. But we admire it as a kind of art, where the word 'art' carries with it all the subtle and elaborate implications of the modern European aesthetic consciousness. We can be perfectly certain that the Greeks did not admire it in any such way. They approached it from a different point of view. What this was, we can perhaps discover by reading what people like Plato wrote about it; but not without great pains, because the first thing every modern reader does, when he reads what Plato has to say about poetry, is to assume that Plato is describing an aesthetic experience similar to our own. The second thing he does is to lose his temper because Plato describes it so badly. With most readers there is no third stage.

Ars in medieval Latin, like 'art' in the early modern English which borrowed both word and sense, meant any special form of book-learning, such as grammar or logic, magic or astrology. That is still its meaning in the time of Shakespeare: 'lie there, my art', says Prospero, putting off his magic gown. But the Renaissance, first in Italy and then elsewhere, re-established the old meaning; and the Renaissance artists, like those of the ancient world, did actually think of themselves as craftsmen. It was not until the seventeenth century that the problems and conceptions of aesthetic began to be disentangled from those of technic or the philosophy of craft. In the late eighteenth century the disentanglement had gone so far as to establish a distinction between the fine

arts and the useful arts; where 'fine' arts meant, not delicate or highly skilled arts, but 'beautiful' arts (*les beaux arts*, *le belle arti*, *die schöne Kunst*). In the nineteenth century this phrase, abbreviated by leaving out the epithet and generalized by substituting the singular for the distributive plural, became 'art'. [...]

V. Art as Amusement

1 Amusement art

If an artifact is designed to stimulate a certain emotion, and if this emotion is intended not for discharge into the occupations of ordinary life, but for enjoyment as something of value in itself, the function of the artifact is to amuse or entertain. Magic is useful, in the sense that the emotions it excites have a practical function in the affairs of every day; amusement is not useful but only enjoyable, because there is a watertight bulkhead between its world and the world of common affairs. The emotions generated by amusement run their course within this watertight compartment.

Every emotion, dynamically considered, has two phases in its existence: charge or excitation, and discharge. The discharge of an emotion is some act done at the prompting of that emotion, by doing which we work the emotion off and relieve ourselves of the tension which, until thus discharged, it imposes upon us. The emotions generated by an amusement must be discharged, like any others; but they are discharged within the amusement itself. This is in fact the peculiarity of amusement. An amusement is a device for the discharge of emotions in such a way that they shall not interfere with the concerns of practical life. But since practical life is only definable as that part of life which is not amusement, this statement, if meant for a definition, would be circular. We must therefore say: to establish a distinction between amusement and practical life¹ is to divide experience into two parts, so related that the emotions generated in the one are not allowed to discharge themselves in the other. In the one, emotions are treated as ends in themselves; in the other, as forces whose operation achieves certain ends beyond them. The first part is now called amusement, the second part practical life.

In order that emotion may be discharged without affecting practical life, a make-believe situation must be created in which to discharge it. This situation will of course be one which 'represents' the real situation in which the emotion would discharge itself practically. The difference between the two, which has been indicated by calling them respectively real and make-believe, is simply this: the so-called make-believe situation is one in which it is understood that the emotion discharged shall be 'earthed', that is, shall not involve the consequences which it would involve under the conditions of practical life. Thus, if one man expresses hatred for another by shaking his fist at him, threatening him, and so forth, he will ordinarily be regarded as a dangerous character, dangerous in particular to the man he has threatened, who will therefore take steps of one kind or another to protect himself: perhaps by appeasing the first, perhaps by attacking him and overpowering him, perhaps by obtaining police protection. If it is understood that nothing of this sort is to be done, that life is to go on exactly as if nothing had happened, then the situation in which the anger was expressed is called a make-believe situation.

Situations of this kind resemble those created by magic in being representative, that is, in evoking emotions like those evoked by the situations they are said to represent. They differ in being 'unreal' or 'make-believe'; that is, in that the emotions they evoke are intended to be earthed instead of overflowing into the situations represented. This element of make-believe is what is known as (theatrical) 'illusion', an element peculiar to amusement art, and never found either in magic or in art proper. If in a magical ritual one says of a painting 'this is a bison', or of a wax figure 'this is my enemy', there is no illusion. One knows perfectly well the difference between the two things. The make-believe of amusement art differs radically, again, from the so-called make-believe of childish games, which is not amusement but a very serious kind of work, which we call make-believe by way of assimilating it to something that occurs in our adult experience. Calling it by that misdescriptive name, we patronizingly license the child to go on with it; so that the child can work at the really urgent problems of its own life unhampered by the interference which would certainly be forthcoming if adults knew what it was doing.

Comparisons have often been made, sometimes amounting to identification, between art and play. They have never thrown much light on the nature of art, because those who have made them have not troubled to think what they meant by play. If playing means amusing oneself, as it often does, there is no important resemblance between play and art proper; and none between play and representative art in its magical form; but there is more than a mere resemblance between play and amusement art. The two things are the same. If playing means taking part in ritual games, art proper bears little resemblance to that, and amusement art even less; but such games, as we have already seen, not only resemble magic, they are magic. But there is another thing we call play: that mysterious activity which occupies the waking and working lives of children. It is not amusement, though we adults may amuse ourselves by imitating it, and even on privileged occasions taking part in it. It is not magic, though in some ways rather like it. Perhaps it is a good deal like art proper. Giambattista Vico, who knew a lot both about poetry and about children, said that children were 'sublime poets', and he may have been right. But no one knows what children are doing when they play; it is far easier to find out what poets are doing when they write, difficult though that is; and even if art proper and children's play are the same thing, no light is thrown for most of us on art proper by saying so.²

There is a hedonistic theory of art: open, like all forms of hedonism, to the objection that even if the function of art is to give 'delight' (as many good artists have said), still this delight is not pleasure in general but pleasure of a particular kind. When this objection has been met, the theory is a fair enough account of amusement art. The artist as purveyor of amusement makes it his business to please his audience by arousing certain emotions in them and providing them with a make-believe situation in which these emotions can be harmlessly discharged.

The experience of being amused is sought not for the sake of anything to which it stands as means, but for its own sake. Hence, while magic is utilitarian, amusement is not utilitarian but hedonistic. The work of art, so called, which provides the amusement, is, on the contrary, strictly utilitarian. Unlike a work of art proper, it has no value in itself;

it is simply means to an end. It is as skilfully constructed as a work of engineering, as skilfully compounded as a bottle of medicine, to produce a determinate and preconceived effect, the evocation of a certain kind of emotion in a certain kind of audience; and to discharge this emotion within the limits of a make-believe situation. When the arts are described in terms implying that they are essentially forms of skill, the reference, as the terms are ordinarily used nowadays, is to this utilitarian character of amusement art. When the spectator's reception of them is described in psychological terms as a reaction to stimulus, the reference is the same. Theoretically, in both cases, the reference might be to the magical type of representation; but in the modern world that is generally ignored. For the student of modern aesthetic, it is a good rule, whenever he hears or reads statements about art which seem odd or perverse or untrue, to ask whether their oddity (or apparent oddity) may not be due to a confusion between art proper and amusement; a confusion either in the mind of their authors, or in his own.

VI. Art Proper: (1) As Expression

2 Expressing emotion and arousing emotion

Our first question is this. Since the artist proper has something to do with emotion, and what he does with it is not to arouse it, what is it that he does? It will be remembered that the kind of answer we expect to this question is an answer derived from what we all know and all habitually say; nothing original or recondite, but something entirely commonplace.

Nothing could be more entirely commonplace than to say he expresses them. The idea is familiar to every artist, and to every one else who has any acquaintance with the arts. To state it is not to state a philosophical theory or definition of art; it is to state a fact or supposed fact about which, when we have sufficiently identified it, we shall have later to theorize philosophically. For the present it does not matter whether the fact that is alleged, when it is said that the artist expresses emotion, is really a fact or only supposed to be one. Whichever it is, we have to identify it, that is, to decide what it is that people are saying when they use the phrase. Later on, we shall have to see whether it will fit into a coherent theory.

They are referring to a situation, real or supposed, of a definite kind. When a man is said to express emotion, what is being said about him comes to this. At first, he is conscious of having an emotion, but not conscious of what this emotion is. All he is conscious of is a perturbation or excitement, which he feels going on within him, but of whose nature he is ignorant. While in this state, all he can say about his emotion is: 'I feel ... I don't know what I feel.' From this helpless and oppressed condition he extricates himself by doing something which we call expressing himself. This is an activity which has something to do with the thing we call language: he expresses himself by speaking. It has also something to do with consciousness: the emotion expressed is an emotion of whose nature the person who feels it is no longer unconscious. It has also something to do with the way in which he feels the emotion. As unexpressed, he feels it in what we have called a helpless and oppressed way; as expressed, he feels it in a way from which this sense of oppression has vanished. His mind is somehow lightened and eased.

This lightening of emotions which is somehow connected with the expression of them has a certain resemblance to the 'catharsis' by which emotions are earthed through being discharged into a make-believe situation; but the two things are not the same. Suppose the emotion is one of anger. If it is effectively earthed, for example by fancying oneself kicking some one down stairs, it is thereafter no longer present in the mind as anger at all: we have worked it off and are rid of it. If it is expressed, for example by putting it into hot and bitter words, it does not disappear from the mind; we remain angry; but instead of the sense of oppression which accompanies an emotion of anger not yet recognized as such, we have that sense of alleviation which comes when we are conscious of our own emotion as anger, instead of being conscious of it only as an unidentified perturbation. This is what we refer to when we say that it 'does us good' to express our emotions.

The expression of an emotion by speech may be addressed to some one; but if so it is not done with the intention of arousing a like emotion in him. If there is any effect which we wish to produce in the hearer, it is only the effect which we call making him understand how we feel. But, as

we have already seen, this is just the effect which expressing our emotions has on ourselves. It makes us, as well as the people to whom we talk, understand how we feel. A person arousing emotion sets out to affect his audience in a way in which he himself is not necessarily affected. He and his audience stand in quite different relations to the act, very much as physician and patient stand in quite different relations towards a drug administered by the one and taken by the other. A person expressing emotion, on the contrary, is treating himself and his audience in the same kind of way; he is making his emotions clear to his audience, and that is what he is doing to himself.

It follows from this that the expression of emotion, simply as expression, is not addressed to any particular audience. It is addressed primarily to the speaker himself, and secondarily to any one who can understand. Here again, the speaker's attitude towards his audience is quite unlike that of a person desiring to arouse in his audience a certain emotion. If that is what he wishes to do, he must know the audience he is addressing. He must know what type of stimulus will produce the desired kind of reaction in people of that particular sort; and he must adapt his language to his audience in the sense of making sure that it contains stimuli appropriate to their peculiarities. If what he wishes to do is to express his emotions intelligibly, he has to express them in such a way as to be intelligible to himself; his audience is then in the position of persons who overhear him doing this. Thus the stimulus-and-reaction terminology has no applicability to the situation.

The means-and-end, or technique, terminology too is inapplicable. Until a man has expressed his emotion, he does not yet know what emotion it is. The act of expressing it is therefore an exploration of his own emotions. He is trying to find out what these emotions are. There is certainly here a directed process: an effort, that is, directed upon a certain end; but the end is not something foreseen and preconceived, to which appropriate means can be thought out in the light of our knowledge of its special character. Expression is an activity of which there can be no technique.

3 Expression and individualization

Expressing an emotion is not the same thing as describing it. To say 'I am angry' is to describe

one's emotion, not to express it. The words in which it is expressed need not contain any reference to anger as such at all. Indeed, so far as they simply and solely express it, they cannot contain any such reference. [...]

The reason why description, so far from helping expression, actually damages it, is that description generalizes. To describe a thing is to call it a thing of such and such a kind: to bring it under a conception, to classify it. Expression, on the contrary, individualizes. The anger which I feel here and now, with a certain person, for a certain cause, is no doubt an instance of anger, and in describing it as anger one is telling truth about it; but it is much more than mere anger: it is a peculiar anger, not quite like any anger that I ever felt before, and probably not quite like any anger I shall ever feel again. To become fully conscious of it means becoming conscious of it not merely as an instance of anger, but as this quite peculiar anger. Expressing it, we saw, has something to do with becoming conscious of it; therefore, if being fully conscious of it means being conscious of all its peculiarities, fully expressing it means expressing all its peculiarities. The poet, therefore, in proportion as he understands his business, gets as far away as possible from merely labelling his emotions as instances of this or that general kind, and takes enormous pains to individualize them by expressing them in terms which reveal their difference from any other emotion of the same sort.

This is a point in which art proper, as the expression of emotion, differs sharply and obviously from any craft whose aim it is to arouse emotion. The end which a craft sets out to realize is always conceived in general terms, never individualized. However accurately defined it may be, it is always defined as the production of a thing having characteristics that could be shared by other things. A joiner, making a table out of these pieces of wood and no others, makes it to measurements and specifications which, even if actually shared by no other table, might in principle be shared by other tables. A physician treating a patient for a certain complaint is trying to produce in him a condition which might be, and probably has been, often produced in others, namely, the condition of recovering from that complaint. So an 'artist' setting out to produce a certain emotion in his audience is setting out to

produce not an individual emotion, but an emotion of a certain kind. It follows that the means appropriate to its production will be not individual means but means of a certain kind: that is to say, means which are always in principle replaceable by other similar means. As every good craftsman insists, there is always a 'right way' of performing any operation. A 'way' of acting is a general pattern to which various individual actions may conform. In order that the 'work of art' should produce its intended psychological effect, therefore, whether this effect be magical or merely amusing, what is necessary is that it should satisfy certain conditions, possess certain characteristics: in other words be, not this work and no other, but a work of this kind and of no other. [...]

Art proper, as expression of emotion, has nothing to do with all this. The artist proper is a person who, grappling with the problem of expressing a certain emotion, says, 'I want to get this clear.' It is no use to him to get something else clear, however like it this other thing may be. Nothing will serve as a substitute. He does not want a thing of a certain kind, he wants a certain thing. This is why the kind of person who takes his literature as psychology, saying 'How admirably this writer depicts the feelings of women, or bus-drivers, or homosexuals ...', necessarily misunderstands every real work of art with which he comes into contact, and takes for good art, with infallible precision, what is not art at all.

4 Selection and aesthetic emotion

It has sometimes been asked whether emotions can be divided into those suitable for expression by artists and those unsuitable. If by art one means art proper, and identifies this with expression, the only possible answer is that there can be no such distinction. Whatever is expressible is expressible. There may be ulterior motives in special cases which make it desirable to express some emotions and not others; but only if by 'express' one means express publicly, that is, allow people to overhear one expressing oneself. This is because one cannot possibly decide that a certain emotion is one which for some reason it would be undesirable to express thus publicly, unless one first becomes conscious of it; and doing this, as we saw, is somehow bound up with expressing it.

If art means the expression of emotion, the artist as such must be absolutely candid; his speech must be absolutely free. This is not a precept, it is a statement. It does not mean that the artist ought to be candid, it means that he is an artist only in so far as he is candid. Any kind of selection, any decision to express this emotion and not that, is inartistic not in the sense that it damages the perfect sincerity which distinguishes good art from bad, but in the sense that it represents a further process of a non-artistic kind, carried out when the work of expression proper is already complete. For until that work is complete one does not know what emotions one feels; and is therefore not in a position to pick and choose, and give one of them preferential treatment.

From these considerations a certain corollary follows about the division of art into distinct arts. Two such divisions are current: one according to the medium in which the artist works, into painting, poetry, music, and the like; the other according to the kind of emotion he expresses, into tragic, comic, and so forth. We are concerned with the second. If the difference between tragedy and comedy is a difference between the emotions they express, it is not a difference that can be present to the artist's mind when he is beginning his work; if it were, he would know what emotion he was going to express before he had expressed it. No artist, therefore, so far as he is an artist proper, can set out to write a comedy, a tragedy, an elegy, or the like. [...]

The same considerations provide an answer to the question whether there is such a thing as a specific 'aesthetic emotion'. If it is said that there is such an emotion independently of its expression in art, and that the business of artists is to express it, we must answer that such a view is nonsense. It implies, first, that artists have emotions of various kinds, among which is this peculiar aesthetic emotion; secondly, that they select this aesthetic emotion for expression. If the first proposition were true, the second would have to be false. If artists only find out what their emotions are in the course of finding out how to express them, they cannot begin the work of expression by deciding what emotion to express.

In a different sense, however, it is true that there is a specific aesthetic emotion. As we have seen, an unexpressed emotion is accompanied by a feeling of oppression; when it is expressed and

thus comes into consciousness the same emotion is accompanied by a new feeling of alleviation or easement, the sense that this oppression is removed. It resembles the feeling of relief that comes when a burdensome intellectual or moral problem has been solved. We may call it, if we like, the specific feeling of having successfully expressed ourselves; and there is no reason why it should not be called a specific aesthetic emotion. But it is not a specific kind of emotion pre-existing to the expression of it, and having the peculiarity that when it comes to be expressed it is expressed artistically. It is an emotional colouring which attends the expression of any emotion whatever. [. . .]

7 Expressing emotion and betraying emotion

Finally, the expressing of emotion must not be confused with what may be called the betraying of it, that is, exhibiting symptoms of it. When it is said that the artist in the proper sense of that word is a person who expresses his emotions, this does not mean that if he is afraid he turns pale and stammers; if he is angry he turns red and bellows; and so forth. These things are no doubt called expressions; but just as we distinguish proper and improper senses of the word 'art', so we must distinguish proper and improper senses of the word 'expression', and in the context of a discussion about art this sense of expression is an improper sense. The characteristic mark of expression proper is lucidity or intelligibility; a person who expresses something thereby becomes conscious of what it is that he is expressing, and enables others to become conscious of it in himself and in them. Turning pale and stammering is a natural accompaniment of fear, but a person who in addition to being afraid also turns pale and stammers does not thereby become conscious of the precise quality of his emotion. About that he is as much in the dark as he would be if (were that possible) he could feel fear without also exhibiting these symptoms of it.

Confusion between these two senses of the word 'expression' may easily lead to false critical estimates, and so to false aesthetic theory. It is sometimes thought a merit in an actress that when she is acting a pathetic scene she can work herself up to such an extent as to weep real tears. There may be some ground for that opinion if

acting is not an art but a craft, and if the actress's object in that scene is to produce grief in her audience; and even then the conclusion would follow only if it were true that grief cannot be produced in the audience unless symptoms of grief are exhibited by the performer. And no doubt this is how most people think of the actor's work. But if his business is not amusement but art, the object at which he is aiming is not to produce a preconceived emotional effect on his audience but by means of a system of expressions, or language, composed partly of speech and partly of gesture, to explore his own emotions: to discover emotions in himself of which he was unaware, and, by permitting the audience to witness the discovery, enable them to make a similar discovery about themselves. In that case it is not her ability to weep real tears that would mark out a good actress; it is her ability to make it clear to herself and her audience what the tears are about.

This applies to every kind of art. The artist never rants. [. . .]

VII. Art Proper: (2) As Imagination

1 The problem defined

The next question in the programme laid down at the beginning of the preceding chapter was put in this way: What is a work of art, granted that there is something in art proper (not only in art falsely so called) to which that name is applied, and that, since art is not craft, this thing is not an artifact? It is something made by the artist, but not made by transforming a given raw material, nor by carrying out a preconceived plan, nor by way of realizing the means to a preconceived end. What is this kind of making? [. . .]

5 The work of art as imaginary object

If the making of a tune is an instance of imaginative creation, a tune is an imaginary thing. And the same applies to a poem or a painting or any other work of art. This seems paradoxical; we are apt to think that a tune is not an imaginary thing but a real thing, a real collection of noises; that a painting is a real piece of canvas covered with real colours; and so on. I hope to show, if the reader will have patience, that there is no paradox here; that both these propositions express what we do

as a matter of fact say about works of art; and that they do not contradict one another, because they are concerned with different things.

When, speaking of a work of art (tune, picture, &c.), we mean by art a specific craft, intended as a stimulus for producing specific emotional effects in an audience, we certainly mean to designate by the term 'work of art' something that we should call real. The artist as magician or purveyor of amusement is necessarily a craftsman making real things, and making them out of some material according to some plan. His works are as real as the works of an engineer, and for the same reason.

But it does not at all follow that the same is true of an artist proper. His business is not to produce an emotional effect in an audience, but, for example, to make a tune. This tune is already complete and perfect when it exists merely as a tune in his head, that is, an imaginary tune. Next, he may arrange for the tune to be played before an audience. Now there comes into existence a real tune, a collection of noises. But which of these two things is the work of art? Which of them is the music? The answer is implied in what we have already said: the music, the work of art, is not the collection of noises, it is the tune in the composer's head. The noises made by the performers, and heard by the audience, are not the music at all; they are only means by which the audience, if they listen intelligently (not otherwise), can reconstruct for themselves the imaginary tune that existed in the composer's head.

This is not a paradox. It is not something *παραλογαν*, contrary to what we ordinarily believe and express in our ordinary speech. We all know perfectly well, and remind each other often enough, that a person who hears the noises the instruments make is not thereby possessing himself of the music. Perhaps no one can do that unless he does hear the noises; but there is something else which he must do as well. Our ordinary word for this other thing is listening; and the listening which we have to do when we hear the noises made by musicians is in a way rather like the thinking we have to do when we hear the noises made, for example, by a person lecturing on a scientific subject. We hear the sound of his voice; but what he is doing is not simply to make noises, but to develop a scientific thesis. The noises are meant to assist us in achieving what he assumes

to be our purpose in coming to hear him lecture, that is, thinking this same scientific thesis for ourselves. The lecture, therefore, is not a collection of noises made by the lecturer with his organs of speech; it is a collection of scientific thoughts related to those noises in such a way that a person who not only hears but thinks as well becomes able to think thought by means of speech, if we like; but if we do, we must think of communication not as an 'imparting' of thought by the speaker to the hearer, the speaker somehow planting his thought in the hearer's receptive mind, but as a 'reproduction' of the speaker's thought by the hearer, in virtue of his own active thinking. [. . .]

XIV. The Artist and the Community

4 *The audience as understander*

What is meant by saying that the painter 'records' in his picture the experience which he had in painting it? With this question we come to the subject of the audience, for the audience consists of anybody and everybody to whom such records are significant.

It means that the picture, when seen by some one else or by the painter himself subsequently, produces in him (we need not ask how) sensuous-emotional or psychical experiences which, when raised from impressions to ideas by the activity of the spectator's consciousness, are transmuted into a total imaginative experience identical with that of the painter. This experience of the spectator's does not repeat the comparatively poor experience of a person who merely looks at the subject; it repeats the richer and more highly organized experience of a person who has not only looked at it but has painted it as well.

That is why, as so many people have observed, we 'see more in' a really good picture of a given subject than we do in the subject itself. That is why, too, many people prefer what is called 'nature' or 'real life' to the finest pictures, because they prefer not to be shown so much, in order to keep their apprehensions at a lower and more manageable level, where they can embroider what they see with likes and dislikes, fancies and emotions of their own, not intrinsically connected with the subject. A great portrait painter, in the

time it takes him to paint a sitter, intensely active in absorbing impressions and converting them into an imaginative vision of the man, may easily see through the mask that is good enough to deceive a less active and less pertinacious observer, and detect in a mouth or an eye or the turn of a head things that have long been concealed. There is nothing mysterious about this insight. Every one judges men by the impressions he gets of them and his power of becoming aware of these impressions; and the artist is a man whose life's work consists in doing that. The wonder is rather that so few artists do it revealingly. That is perhaps because people do not want it done, and artists fall in with their desire for what is called a good likeness, a picture that reveals nothing new, but only recalls what they have already felt in the sitter's presence.

How is any one to know that the imaginative experience which the spectator, by the work of his consciousness, makes out of the sensations he receives from a painting 'repeats', or is 'identical' with, the experience which the artist had in painting it? That question has already been raised about language in general [. . .] and answered by saying that there is no possibility of an absolute assurance; the only assurance we can have 'is an empirical and relative assurance, becoming progressively stronger as conversation proceeds, and based on the fact that neither party seems to the other to be talking nonsense.' The same answer holds good here. We can never absolutely know that the imaginative experience we obtain from a work of art is identical with that of the artist. In proportion as the artist is a great one, we can be pretty certain that we have only caught his meaning partially and imperfectly. But the same applies to any case in which we hear what a man says or read what he writes. And a partial and imperfect understanding is not the same thing as a complete failure to understand.

For example, a man reading the first canto of the *Inferno* may have no idea what Dante meant by the three beasts. Are they deadly sins, or are they potentates, or what are they? he may ask. In that perplexity, however, he has not completely lost contact with his author. There is still a great deal in the canto which he can understand, that is to say, transmute from impression into idea by the work of his consciousness; and all this, he can be fairly confident, he grasps as Dante meant it.

And even the three beasts, though he does not understand them completely (something remains obstinately a mere untransmuted impression) he understands in part; he sees that they are something the poet dreads, and he imaginatively experiences the dread, though he does not know what it is that is dreaded.

Or take (since Dante may be ruled out as allegorical and therefore unfair) an example from modern poetry. I do not know how many readers of Mr. Eliot's poem *Sweeney among the Nightingales* have the least idea what precisely the situation is which the poet is depicting. I have never heard or read any expression of such an idea. Sweeney has dropped asleep in a restaurant, vaguely puzzled by the fact that the Convent of the Sacred Heart, next door, has reminded him of something, he cannot tell what. A wounded Heart, and waiting husbandless women. As he snores all through the second verse a prostitute in a long cloak comes and sits on his knees, and at that moment he dreams the answer. It is Agamemnon's cry – 'O, I am wounded mortally to the heart' – wounded to death at his homecoming by the false wife he had left behind. He wakes, stretching and laughing (tilting the girl off his knee), as he realizes that in the queer working of his mind the hooded husbandless nuns and the cloaked husbandless girl, waiting there like a spider for her prey, are both Klytaemnestra, the faithless wife who threw her cloak (the 'net of death') round her lord and stabbed him.

I quote this case because I had known and enjoyed the poem for years before I saw that this was what it was all about; and nevertheless I understood enough to value it highly. And I am willing to believe that the distinguished critic who thinks that the 'liquid siftings' of the nightingales were not their excrement, but their songs, values it highly too, and not everywhere so unintelligently as that sample would suggest.

The imaginative experience contained in a work of art is not a closed whole. There is no sense in putting the dilemma that a man either understands it (that is, has made that entire experience his own) or does not. Understanding it is always a complex business, consisting of many phases, each complete in itself but each leading on to the next. A determined and intelligent audience will penetrate into this complex far enough, if the work of art is a good one, to get something

of value; but it need not on that account think it has extracted 'the' meaning of the work, for there is no such thing. The doctrine of a plurality of meanings, expounded for the case of holy scripture by St. Thomas Aquinas, is in principle perfectly sound: as he states it, the only trouble is that it does not go far enough. In some shape or other, it is true of all language.

5 *The audience as collaborator*

The audience as understander, attempting an exact reconstruction in its own mind of the artist's imaginative experience, is engaged on an endless quest. It can carry out this reconstruction only in part. This looks as if the artist were a kind of transcendent genius whose meaning is always too profound for his audience of humbler mortals to grasp in a more than fragmentary way. And an artist inclined to give himself airs will no doubt interpret the situation like that. But another interpretation is possible. The artist may take his audience's limitations into account when composing his work; in which case they will appear to him not as limitations on the extent to which his work will prove comprehensible, but as conditions determining the subject-matter or meaning of the work itself. In so far as the artist feels himself at one with his audience, this will involve no condescension on his part; it will mean that he takes it as his business to express not his own private emotions, irrespectively of whether any one else feels them or not, but the emotions he shares with his audience. Instead of conceiving himself as a mystagogue, leading his audience as far as it can follow along the dark and difficult paths of his own mind, he will conceive himself as his audience's spokesman, saying for it the things it wants to say but cannot say unaided. Instead of setting up for the great man who (as Hegel said) imposes upon the world the task of understanding him, he will be a humbler person, imposing upon himself the task of understanding his world, and thus enabling it to understand itself.

In this case his relation to his audience will no longer be a mere by-product of his aesthetic experience, as it still was in the situation described in the preceding section; it will be an integral part of that experience itself. If what he is trying to do is to express emotions that are not his own merely, but his audience's as well, his success in doing this

will be tested by his audience's reception of what he has to say. What he says will be something that his audience says through his mouth; and his satisfaction in having expressed what he feels will be at the same time, in so far as he communicates this expression to them, their satisfaction in having expressed what they feel. There will thus be something more than mere communication from artist to audience, there will be collaboration between audience and artist.

We have inherited a long tradition, beginning in the late eighteenth century with the cult of 'genius', and lasting all through the nineteenth, which is inimical to this second alternative. But I have already said that this tradition is dying away. Artists are less inclined to give themselves airs than they used to be; and there are many indications that they are more willing than they were, even a generation ago, to regard their audiences as collaborators. It is perhaps no longer foolish to hope that this way of conceiving the relation between artist and audience may be worth discussing.

There are grounds for thinking that this idea of the relation is the right one. [. . .] [W]e must look at the facts; and we shall find that, whatever airs they may give themselves, artists have always been in the habit of treating the public as collaborators. On a technical theory of art, this is, in a sense, comprehensible. If the artist is trying to arouse certain emotions in his audience, a refusal on the part of the audience to develop these emotions proves that the artist has failed. But this is one of the many points in which the technical theory does not so much miss the truth as misrepresent it. An artist need not be a slave to the technical theory, in order to feel that his audience's approbation is relevant to the question whether he has done his work well or ill. There have been painters who would not exhibit, poets who would not publish, musicians who would not have their works performed; but those who have made this great refusal, so far as one knows them, have not been of the highest quality. There has been a lack of genuineness about their work, corresponding to this strain of secretiveness in their character, which is inconsistent with good art. The man who feels that he has something to say is not only willing to say it in public: he craves to say it in public, and feels that until it has been thus said it has not been said at all. The public is

always, no doubt, a circumscribed one: it may consist only of a few friends, and at most it includes only people who can buy or borrow a book or get hold of a theatre ticket; but every artist knows that publication of some kind is a necessity to him.

Every artist knows, too, that the reception he gets from his public is not a matter of indifference to him. He may train himself to take rebuffs with a stiff lip, and go on working in spite of bad sales and hostile reviews. He must so train himself, if he is to do his best work; because with the best will in the world (quite apart from venality in reviewers and frivolity in readers) no one enjoys having his unconscious emotions dragged into the light of consciousness, and consequently there is often a strongly painful element in a genuine aesthetic experience, and a strong temptation to reject it. But the reason why the artist finds it so hard to train himself in this way is because these rebuffs wound him not in his personal vanity, but in his judgement as to the soundness of the work he has done.

Here we come to the point. One might suppose that the artist by himself is in his own eyes a sufficient judge of his work's value. If he is satisfied with it, why should he mind what others think? But things do not work like that. The artist, like any one else who comes before an audience, must put a bold face on it; he must do the best he can, and pretend that he knows it is good. But probably no artist has ever been so conceited as to be wholly taken in by his own pretence. Unless he sees his own proclamation, 'This is good,' echoed on the faces of his audience – 'Yes, that is good' – he wonders whether he was speaking the truth or not. He thought he had enjoyed and recorded a genuine aesthetic experience, but has he? Was he suffering from a corruption of consciousness? Has his audience judged him better than he judged himself?

These are facts which no artist, I think, will deny, unless in that feverish way in which we all deny what we know to be true and will not accept. If they are facts, they prove that, in spite of all disclaimers, artists do look upon their audiences as collaborators with themselves in the attempt to answer the question: is this a genuine work of art or not? But this is the thin edge of a wedge. Once the audience's collaboration is admitted thus far, it must be admitted farther.

The artist's business is to express emotions; and the only emotions he can express are those which he feels, namely, his own. No one can judge whether he has expressed them except some one who feels them. If they are his own and no one else's, there is no one except himself who can judge whether he has expressed them or not. If he attaches any importance to the judgement of his audience, it can only be because he thinks that the emotions he has tried to express are emotions not peculiar to himself, but shared by his audience, and that the expression of them he has achieved (if indeed he has achieved it) is as valid for the audience as it is for himself. In other words, he undertakes his artistic labour not as a personal effort on his own private behalf, but as a public labour on behalf of the community to which he belongs. Whatever statement of emotion he utters is prefaced by the implicit rubric, not 'I feel,' but 'we feel.' And it is not strictly even a labour undertaken by himself on behalf of the community. It is a labour in which he invites the community to participate; for their function as audience is not passively to accept his work, but to do it over again for themselves. If he invites them to do this, it is because he has reason to think they will accept his invitation, that is, because he thinks he is inviting them to do what they already want to do.

In so far as the artist feels all this (and an artist who did not feel it would not feel the craving to publish his work, or take seriously the public's opinion of it), he feels it not only after his work is completed, but from its inception and throughout its composition. The audience is perpetually present to him as a factor in his artistic labour; not as an anti-aesthetic factor, corrupting the sincerity of his work by considerations of reputation and reward, but as an aesthetic factor, defining what the problem is which as an artist he is trying to solve – what emotions he is to express – and what constitutes a solution of it. The audience which the artist thus feels as collaborating with himself may be a large one or a small one, but it is never absent.

6 *Aesthetic individualism*

The understanding of the audience's function as collaborator is a matter of importance for the future both of aesthetic theory and of art itself.

The obstacle to understanding it is a traditional individualistic psychology through which, as through distorting glasses, we are in the habit of looking at artistic work. We think of the artist as a self-contained personality, sole author of everything he does: of the emotions he expresses as his personal emotions, and of his expression of them as his personal expression. We even forget what it is that he thus expresses, and speak of his work as 'self-expression', persuading ourselves that what makes a poem great is the fact that it 'expresses a great personality', whereas, if self-expression is the order of the day, whatever value we set on such a poem is due to its expressing not the poet – what is Shakespeare to us, or we to Shakespeare? – but ourselves.

It would be tedious to enumerate the tangles of misunderstanding which this nonsense about self-expression has generated. To take one such only: it has set us off looking for 'the man Shakespeare' in his poems, and trying to reconstruct his life and opinions from them, as if that were possible, or as if, were it possible, it would help us to appreciate his work. It has degraded criticism to the level of personal gossip, and confused art with exhibitionism. What I prefer to attempt is not a tale of misdeeds, but a refutation.

In principle, this refutation is simple. Individualism conceives a man as if he were God, a self-contained and self-sufficient creative power whose only task is to be himself and to exhibit his nature in whatever works are appropriate to it. But a man, in his art as in everything else, is a finite being. Everything that he does is done in relation to others like himself. As artist, he is a speaker; but a man speaks as he has been taught; he speaks the tongue in which he was born. The musician did not invent his scale or his instruments; even if he invents a new scale or a new instrument he is only modifying what he learnt from others. The painter did not invent the idea of painting pictures or the pigments and brushes with which he paints them. Even the most precocious poet hears and reads poetry before he writes it. Moreover, just as every artist stands in relation to other artists from whom he has acquired his art, so he stands in relation to some audience to whom he addresses it. The child learning his mother tongue, as we have seen, learns simultaneously to be a speaker and to be a listener; he

listens to others speaking, and speaks to others listening. It is the same with artists. They become poets or painters or musicians not by some process of development from within, as they grow beards; but by living in a society where these languages are current. Like other speakers, they speak to those who understand.

The aesthetic activity is the activity of speaking. Speech is speech only so far as it is both spoken and heard. A man may, no doubt, speak to himself and be his own hearer; but what he says to himself is in principle capable of being said to any one sharing his language. As a finite being, man becomes aware of himself as a person only so far as he finds himself standing in relation to others of whom he simultaneously becomes aware as persons. And there is no point in his life at which a man has finished becoming aware of himself as a person. That awareness is constantly being reinforced, developed, applied in new ways. On every such occasion the old appeal must be made: he must find others whom he can recognize as persons in this new fashion, or he cannot as a finite being assure himself that this new phase of personality is genuinely in his possession. If he has a new thought, he must explain it to others, in order that, finding them able to understand it, he may be sure it is a good one. If he has a new emotion, he must express it to others, in order that, finding them able to share it, he may be sure his consciousness of it is not corrupt.

This is not inconsistent with the doctrine, stated elsewhere in this book, that the aesthetic experience or aesthetic activity is one which goes on in the artist's mind. The experience of being listened to is an experience which goes on in the mind of the speaker, although in order to [assure] its existence a listener is necessary, so that the activity is a collaboration. Mutual love is a collaborative activity; but the experience of this activity in the mind of each lover taken singly is a different experience from that of loving and being spurned.

A final refutation of aesthetic individualism will, therefore, turn on analysis of the relation between the artist and his audience, developing the view stated in the last section that this is a case of collaboration. But I propose to lead up to this by way of two other arguments. I shall try to show that the individualistic theory of artistic creation

is false (1) as regards the relation between a given artist and those fellow artists who in terms of the individualistic theory are said to 'influence' him; (2) as regards his relation with those who are said to 'perform his works'; and (3) as regards his relation with the persons known as his 'audience'. In each case, I shall maintain, the relation is really collaborative.

7 *Collaboration between artists*

Individualism would have it that the work of a genuine artist is altogether 'original', that is to say, purely his own work and not in any way that of other artists. The emotions expressed must be simply and solely his own, and so must his way of expressing them. It is a shock to persons labouring under this prejudice when they find that Shakespeare's plays, and notably *Hamlet*, that happy hunting-ground of self-expressionists, are merely adaptations of plays by other writers, scraps of Holinshed, *Lives* by Plutarch, or excerpts from the *Gesta Romanorum*; that Handel copied out into his own works whole movements by Arne; that the Scherzo of Beethoven's C minor Symphony begins by reproducing the Finale of Mozart's G Minor, differently barred; or that Turner was in the habit of lifting his composition from the works of Claude Lorrain. Shakespeare or Handel or Beethoven or Turner would have thought it odd that anybody should be shocked. All artists have modelled their style upon that of others, used subjects that others have used, and treated them as others have treated them already. A work of art so constructed is a work of collaboration. It is partly by the man whose name it bears, partly by those from whom he has borrowed. What we call the works of Shakespeare, for example, proceed in this way not simply and solely from the individual mind of the man William Shakespeare of Stratford (or, for that matter, the man Francis Bacon of Verulam) but partly from Kyd, partly from Marlowe, and so forth.

The individualistic theory of authorship would lead to the most absurd conclusions. If we regard the *Iliad* as a fine poem, the question whether it was written by one man or by many is automatically, for us, settled. If we regard Chartres cathedral as a work of art, we must contradict the

architects who tell us that one spire was built in the twelfth century and the other in the sixteenth, and convince ourselves that it was all built at once. Or again: English prose of the early seventeenth century may be admired when it is original; but not the Authorized Version, for that is a translation, and a translation, because no one man is solely responsible for it, cannot be a work of art. I am very willing to allow with Descartes that 'often there is less perfection in works put together out of several parts, and made by the hands of different masters, than in those at which one only has worked'; but not to replace his 'often' by 'always'. I am very willing to recognize that, under the reign of nineteenth-century individualism, good artists have seldom been willing to translate, because they have gone chasing after 'originality'; but not to deny the name of poetry to Catullus's rendering of Sappho merely because I happen to know it for a translation.

If we look candidly at the history of art, or even the little of it that we happen to know, we shall see that collaboration between artists has always been the rule. I refer especially to that kind of collaboration in which one artist grafts his own work upon that of another, or (if you wish to be abusive) plagiarizes another's for incorporation in his own. A new code of artistic morality grew up in the nineteenth century, according to which plagiarism was a crime. I will not ask how much that had to do, whether as cause or as effect, with the artistic barrenness and mediocrity of the age (though it is obvious, I think, that a man who can be annoyed with another for stealing his ideas must be pretty poor in ideas, as well as much less concerned for the intrinsic value of what ideas he has than for his own reputation); I will only say that this fooling about personal property must cease. Let painters and writers and musicians steal with both hands whatever they can use, wherever they can find it. And if any one objects to having his own precious ideas borrowed by others, the remedy is easy. He can keep them to himself by not publishing; and the public will probably have cause to thank him.

8 *Collaboration between author and performer*

Certain kinds of artist, notably the dramatist and the musician, compose for performance.

Individualism would maintain that their works, however 'influenced,' as the phrase goes, by those of other artists, issue from the writer's pen complete and finished; they are plays by Shakespeare and symphonies by Beethoven, and these men are great artists, who have written on their own responsibility a text which, as the work of a great artist, imposes on the theatre and the orchestra a duty to perform it exactly as it stands.

But the book of a play or the score of a symphony, however cumbered with stage-directions, expression-marks, metronome figures, and so forth, cannot possibly indicate in every detail how the work is to be performed. Tell the performer that he must perform the thing exactly as it is written, and he knows you are talking nonsense. He knows that however much he tries to obey you there are still countless points he must decide for himself. And the author, if he is qualified to write a play or a symphony, knows it too, and reckons on it. He demands of his performers a spirit of constructive and intelligent cooperation. He recognizes that what he is putting on paper is not a play or a symphony, or even complete directions for performing one, but only a rough outline of such directions, where the performers, with the help, no doubt, of producer and conductor, are not only permitted but required to fill in the details. Every performer is co-author of the work he performs.

This is obvious enough, but in our tradition of the last hundred years and more we have been constantly shutting our eyes to it. Authors and performers have found themselves driven into a state of mutual suspicion and hostility. Performers have been told that they must not claim the status of collaborators, and must accept the sacred text just as they find it; authors have tried to guard against any danger of collaboration from performers by making their book or their text fool-proof. The result has been not to stop performers from collaborating (that is impossible), but to breed up a generation of performers who are not qualified to collaborate boldly and competently. When Mozart leaves it to his soloist to improvise the cadenza of a concerto, he is in effect insisting that the soloist shall be more than a mere executant; he is to be something of a composer, and therefore trained to collaborate intelligently. Authors who try to produce a fool-proof text are choosing fools as their collaborators.

9 *The artist and his audience*

The individualism of the artist, broken down by collaboration with his fellow artists and still further by collaboration with his performers, where he has them, is not yet wholly vanquished. There still remains the most difficult and important problem of all, namely, that of his relation to his audience. We have seen in § 6 that this, too, must in theory be a case of collaboration; but it is one thing to argue the point in theory, and quite another to show it at work in practice. In order to do this, I will begin with the case where the artist is a collaborative unit consisting of author and performers, as in the theatre, and consider how, as a matter of empirical fact, this unit is related to the audience.

If one wants to answer this question for oneself, the best way to proceed is to attend the dress rehearsal of a play. In the rehearsal of any given passage, scenery, lighting, and dresses may all be exactly as they are at a public performance; the actors may move and speak exactly as they will 'on the night'; there may be few interruptions for criticism by the producer; and yet the spectator will realize that everything is different. The company are going through the motions of acting a play, and yet no play is being acted. This is not because there have been interruptions, breaking the thread of the performance. A work of art is very tolerant of interruption. The intervals between acts at a play do not break the thread, they rest the audience. Nobody ever read the *Iliad* or the *Commedia* at a sitting, but many people know what they are like. What happens at the dress rehearsal is something quite different from interruption. It can be described by saying that every line, every gesture, falls dead in the empty house. The company is not acting a play at all; it is performing certain actions which will become a play when there is an audience present to act as a sounding-board. It becomes clear, then, that the aesthetic activity which is the play is not an activity on the part of the author and the company together, which this unit can perform in the audience's absence. It is an activity in which the audience is a partner.

Any one, probably, can learn this by watching a dress rehearsal; but the principle does not apply to the theatre alone. It applies to rehearsals by a choir or orchestra, or to a skilled and successful

public speaker rehearsing a speech. A careful study of such things will convince any one who is open to conviction that the position of the audience is very far from being that of a licensed eavesdropper, overhearing something that would be complete without him. Performers know it already. They know that their audience is not passively receptive of what they give it, but is determining by its reception of them how their performance is to be carried on. A person accustomed to extempore speaking, for example, knows that if once he can make contact with his audience it will somehow tell him what he is to say, so that he finds himself saying things he had never thought of before. These are the things which, on that particular subject, he and nobody else ought to be saying to that audience and no other. People to whom this is not a familiar experience are, of course, common; but they have no business to speak in public.

It is a weakness of printed literature that this reciprocity between writer and reader is difficult to maintain. The printing-press separates the writer from his audience and fosters crosspurposes between them. The organization of the literary profession and the 'technique' of good writing, as that is understood among ourselves, consist to a great extent of methods for mitigating this evil; but the evil is only mitigated and not removed. It is intensified by every new mechanization of art. The reason why gramophone music is so unsatisfactory to any one accustomed to real music is not because the mechanical reproduction of the sounds is bad – that could be easily compensated by the hearer's imagination – but because the performers and the audience are out of touch. The audience is not collaborating, it is only overhearing. The same thing happens in the cinema, where collaboration as between author and producer is intense, but as between this unit and the audience non-existent. Performances on the wireless have the same defect. The consequence is that the gramophone, the cinema, and the wireless are perfectly serviceable as vehicles of amusement or of propaganda, for here the audience's function is merely receptive and not creative; but as vehicles of art they are subject to all the defects of the printing-press in an aggravated form. 'Why', one hears it asked, 'should not the modern popular entertainment of the cinema, like the Renaissance popular entertainment

of the theatre, produce a new form of great art?' The answer is simple. In the Renaissance theatre collaboration between author and actors on the one hand, and audience on the other, was a lively reality. In the cinema it is impossible.

The conclusion of this chapter may be summarized briefly. The work of artistic creation is not a work performed in any exclusive or complete fashion in the mind of the person whom we call the artist. That idea is a delusion bred of individualistic psychology, together with a false view of the relation not so much between body and mind as between experience at the psychical level and experience at the level of thought. The aesthetic activity is an activity of thought in the form of consciousness, converting into imagination an experience which, apart from being so converted, is sensuous. This activity is a corporate activity belonging not to any one human being but to a community. It is performed not only by the man whom we individualistically call the artist, but partly by all the other artists of whom we speak as 'influencing' him, where we really mean collaborating with him. It is performed not only by this corporate body of artists, but (in the case of the arts of performance) by executants, who are not merely acting under the artist's orders, but are collaborating with him to produce the finished work. And even now the activity of artistic creation is not complete; for that, there must be an audience, whose function is therefore not a merely receptive one, but collaborative too. The artist (although under the spell of individualistic prejudices he may try to deny it) stands thus in collaborative relations with an entire community; not an ideal community of all human beings as such, but the actual community of fellow artists from whom he borrows, executants whom he employs, and audience to whom he speaks. By recognizing these relations and counting upon them in his work, he strengthens and enriches that work itself; by denying them he impoverishes it.

Notes

- 1 Aestheticians who discuss the relation between two mutually exclusive things called 'Art' and 'Life' are really discussing this distinction.
- 2 Dr. Margaret Lowenfeld (*Play in Childhood*, 1935) has devised a method for exploring the unknown

world of children's play, and has made strange discoveries about the relation of this play to the child's health. My own interpretation of her discoveries may be expressed by saying that they suggest an identity between 'play' in children

and art proper. On the relation between art and health of mind (involving health of body so far as psychological causes may impair or improve bodily health), I shall have something to say later on.

Art as Experience

John Dewey

John Dewey (1859–1952), the foremost American philosopher of the first half of the 20th century, made contributions to virtually every area of philosophical inquiry.

1. The Live Creature

By one of the ironic perversities that often attend the course of affairs, the existence of the works of art upon which formation of an esthetic theory depends has become an obstruction to theory about them. For one reason, these works are products that exist externally and physically. In common conception, the work of art is often identified with the building, book, painting, or statue in its existence apart from human experience. Since the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience, the result is not favorable to understanding. In addition, the very perfection of some of these products, the prestige they possess because of a long history of unquestioned admiration, creates conventions that get in the way of fresh insight. When an art product once attains classic status, it somehow becomes isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from

the human consequences it engenders in actual life-experience.

When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which esthetic theory deals. Art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing, and achievement. A primary task is thus imposed upon one who undertakes to write upon the philosophy of the fine arts. This task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. Mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They *are* the earth in one of its manifest operations. It is the business of those who are concerned with the theory of the earth, geographers and geologists, to make this fact evident in its various implications. The theorist who would deal philosophically with fine art has a like task to accomplish.

If one is willing to grant this position, even if only by way of temporary experiment, he will see that there follows a conclusion at first sight surprising. In order to understand the meaning of

artistic products, we have to forget them for a time, to turn aside from them and have recourse to the ordinary forces and conditions of experience that we do not usually regard as esthetic. We must arrive at the theory of art by means of a detour. For theory is concerned with understanding, insight, not without exclamations of admiration, and stimulation of that emotional outburst often called appreciation. It is quite possible to enjoy flowers in their colored form and delicate fragrance without knowing anything about plants theoretically. But if one sets out to *understand* the flowering of plants, he is committed to finding out something about the interactions of soil, air, water and sunlight that condition the growth of plants.

By common consent, the Parthenon is a great work of art. Yet it has esthetic standing only as the work becomes an experience for a human being. And, if one is to go beyond personal enjoyment into the formation of a theory about that large republic of art of which the building is one member, one has to be willing at some point in his reflections to turn from it to the bustling, arguing, acutely sensitive Athenian citizens, with civic sense identified with a civic religion, of whose experience the temple was an expression, and who built it not as a work of art but as a civic commemoration. The turning to them is as human beings who had needs that were a demand for the building and that were carried to fulfillment in it; it is not an examination such as might be carried on by a sociologist in search for material relevant to his purpose. The one who sets out to theorize about the esthetic experience embodied in the Parthenon must realize in thought what the people into whose lives it entered had in common, as creators and as those who were satisfied with it, with people in our own homes and on our own streets.

In order to *understand* the esthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens: the sights that hold the crowd – the fire-engine rushing by; the machines excavating enormous holes in the earth; the human-fly climbing the steeple-side; the men perched high in air on girders, throwing and catching red-hot bolts. The sources of art in human experience will

be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd; who notes the delight of the housewife in tending her plants, and the intent interest of her goodman in tending the patch of green in front of the house; the zest of the spectator in poking the wood burning on the hearth and in watching the darting flames and crumbling coals. These people, if questioned as to the reason for their actions, would doubtless return reasonable answers. The man who poked the sticks of burning wood would say he did it to make the fire burn better; but he is none the less fascinated by the colorful drama of change enacted before his eyes and imaginatively partakes in it. He does not remain a cold spectator. What Coleridge said of the reader of poetry is true in its way of all who are happily absorbed in their activities of mind and body: "The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, not by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of the journey itself."

The intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged. The difference between such a worker and the inept and careless bungler is as great in the shop as it is in the studio. Oftentimes the product may not appeal to the esthetic sense of those who use the product. The fault, however, is oftentimes not so much with the worker as with the conditions of the market for which his product is designed. Were conditions and opportunities different, things as significant to the eye as those produced by earlier craftsmen would be made.

So extensive and subtly pervasive are the ideas that set Art upon a remote pedestal, that many a person would be repelled rather than pleased if told that he enjoyed his casual recreations, in part at least, because of their esthetic quality. The arts which today have most vitality for the average person are things he does not take to be arts: for instance, the movie, jazzed music, the comic strip, and, too frequently, newspaper accounts of love-nests, murders, and exploits of bandits. For, when what he knows as art is relegated to the museum and gallery, the unconquerable impulse towards experiences enjoyable in themselves

finds such outlet as the daily environment provides. Many a person who protests against the museum conception of art, still shares the fallacy from which that conception springs. For the popular notion comes from a separation of art from the objects and scenes of ordinary experience that many theorists and critics pride themselves upon holding and even elaborating. The times when select and distinguished objects are closely connected with the products of usual vocations are the times when appreciation of the former is most rife and most keen. When, because of their remoteness, the objects acknowledged by the cultivated to be works of fine art seem anemic to the mass of people, esthetic hunger is likely to seek the cheap and the vulgar.

The factors that have glorified fine art by setting it upon a far-off pedestal did not arise within the realm of art nor is their influence confined to the arts. For many persons an aura of mingled awe and unreality encompasses the "spiritual" and the "ideal" while "matter" has become by contrast a term of depreciation, something to be explained away or apologized for. The forces at work are those that have removed religion as well as fine art from the scope of the common or community life. These forces have historically produced so many of the dislocations and divisions of modern life and thought that art could not escape their influence. We do not have to travel to the ends of the earth nor return many millennia in time to find peoples for whom everything that intensifies the sense of immediate living is an object of intense admiration. Bodily scarification, waving feathers, gaudy robes, shining ornaments of gold and silver, of emerald and jade, formed the contents of esthetic arts, and, presumably, without the vulgarity of class exhibitionism that attends their analogues today. Domestic utensils, furnishings of tent and house, rugs, mats, jars, pots, bows, spears, were wrought with such delighted care that today we hunt them out and give them places of honor in our art museums. Yet in their own time and place, such things were enhancements of the processes of everyday life. Instead of being elevated to a niche apart, they belonged to display of prowess, the manifestation of group and clan membership, worship of gods, feasting and fasting, fighting, hunting, and all the rhythmic crises that punctuate the stream of living.

Dancing and pantomime, the sources of the art of the theater, flourished as part of religious rites and celebrations. Musical art abounded in the fingering of the stretched string, the beating of the taut skin, the blowing with reeds. Even in the caves, human habitations were adorned with colored pictures that kept alive to the senses experiences with the animals that were so closely bound with the lives of humans. Structures that housed their gods and the instrumentalities that facilitated commerce with the higher powers were wrought with especial fineness. But the arts of the drama, music, painting, and architecture thus exemplified had no peculiar connection with theaters, galleries, museums. They were part of the significant life of an organized community.

The collective life that was manifested in war, worship, the forum, knew no division between what was characteristic of these places and operations, and the arts that brought color, grace, and dignity, into them. Painting and sculpture were organically one with architecture, as that was one with the social purpose that buildings served. Music and song were intimate parts of the rites and ceremonies in which the meaning of group life was consummated. Drama was a vital reenactment of the legends and history of group life. Not even in Athens can such arts be torn loose from this setting in direct experience and yet retain their significant character. Athletic sports, as well as drama, celebrated and enforced traditions of race and group, instructing the people, commemorating glories, and strengthening their civic pride.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the Athenian Greeks, when they came to reflect upon art, formed the idea that it is an act of reproduction, or imitation. There are many objections to this conception. But the vogue of the theory is testimony to the close connection of the fine arts with daily life; the idea would not have occurred to any one had art been remote from the interests of life. For the doctrine did not signify that art was a literal copying of objects, but that it reflected the emotions and ideas that are associated with the chief institutions of social life. Plato felt this connection so strongly that it led him to his idea of the necessity of censorship of poets, dramatists, and musicians. Perhaps he exaggerated when he said that a change from the Doric to the Lydian mode in music would be the

sure precursor of civic degeneration. But no contemporary would have doubted that music was an integral part of the ethos and the institutions of the community. The idea of "art for art's sake" would not have been even understood.

There must then be historic reasons for the rise of the compartmental conception of fine art. Our present museums and galleries to which works of fine art are removed and stored illustrate some of the causes that have operated to segregate art instead of finding it an attendant of temple, forum, and other forms of associated life. An instructive history of modern art could be written in terms of the formation of the distinctively modern institutions of museum and exhibition gallery. I may point to a few outstanding facts. Most European museums are, among other things, memorials of the rise of nationalism and imperialism. Every capital must have its own museum of painting, sculpture, etc., devoted in part to exhibiting the greatness of its artistic past, and, in other part, to exhibiting the loot gathered by its monarchs in conquest of other nations; for instance, the accumulations of the spoils of Napoleon that are in the Louvre. They testify to the connection between the modern segregation of art and nationalism and militarism. Doubtless this connection has served at times a useful purpose, as in the case of Japan, who, when she was in the process of westernization, saved much of her art treasures by nationalizing the temples that contained them.

The growth of capitalism has been a powerful influence in the development of the museum as the proper home for works of art, and in the promotion of the idea that they are apart from the common life. The *nouveaux riches*, who are an important by-product of the capitalist system, have felt especially bound to surround themselves with works of fine art which, being rare, are also costly. Generally speaking, the typical collector is the typical capitalist. For evidence of good standing in the realm of higher culture, he amasses paintings, statuary, and artistic *bijoux*, as his stocks and bonds certify to his standing in the economic world.

Not merely individuals, but communities and nations, put their cultural good taste in evidence by building opera houses, galleries, and museums. These show that a community is not wholly absorbed in material wealth, because it is willing

to spend its gains in patronage of art. It erects these buildings and collects their contents as it now builds a cathedral. These things reflect and establish superior cultural status, while their segregation from the common life reflects the fact that they are not part of a native and spontaneous culture. They are a kind of counterpart of a holier-than-thou attitude, exhibited not toward persons as such but toward the interests and occupations that absorb most of the community's time and energy.

Modern industry and commerce have an international scope. The contents of galleries and museums testify to the growth of economic cosmopolitanism. The mobility of trade and of populations, due to the economic system, has weakened or destroyed the connection between works of art and the *genius loci* of which they were once the natural expression. As works of art have lost their indigenous status, they have acquired a new one – that of being specimens of fine art and nothing else. Moreover, works of art are now produced, like other articles, for sale in the market. Economic patronage by wealthy and powerful individuals has at many times played a part in the encouragement of artistic production. Probably many a savage tribe had its Maecenas. But now even that much of intimate social connection is lost in the impersonality of a world market. Objects that were in the past valid and significant because of their place in the life of a community now function in isolation from the conditions of their origin. By that fact they are also set apart from common experience, and serve as insignia of taste and certificates of special culture.

Because of changes in industrial conditions the artist has been pushed to one side from the main streams of active interest. Industry has been mechanized and an artist cannot work mechanically for mass production. He is less integrated than formerly in the normal flow of social services. A peculiar esthetic "individualism" results. Artists find it incumbent upon them to betake themselves to their work as an isolated means of "self-expression." In order not to cater to the trend of economic forces, they often feel obliged to exaggerate their separateness to the point of eccentricity. Consequently artistic products take on to a still greater degree the air of something independent and esoteric.

Put the action of all such forces together, and the conditions that create the gulf which exists generally between producer and consumer in modern society operate to create also a chasm between ordinary and esthetic experience. Finally we have, as the record of this chasm, accepted as if it were normal, the philosophies of art that locate it in a region inhabited by no other creature, and that emphasize beyond all reason the merely contemplative character of the esthetic. Confusion of values enters in to accentuate the separation. Adventitious matters, like the pleasure of collecting, of exhibiting, of ownership and display, simulate esthetic values. Criticism is affected. There is much applause for the wonders of appreciation and the glories of the transcendent beauty of art indulged in without much regard to capacity for esthetic perception in the concrete.

My purpose, however, is not to engage in an economic interpretation of the history of the arts, much less to argue that economic conditions are either invariably or directly relevant to perception and enjoyment, or even to interpretation of individual works of art. It is to indicate that *theories* which isolate art and its appreciation by placing them in a realm of their own, disconnected from other modes of experiencing, are not inherent in the subject-matter but arise because of specifiable extraneous conditions. Embedded as they are in institutions and in habits of life, these conditions operate effectively because they work so unconsciously. Then the theorist assumes they are embedded in the nature of things. Nevertheless, the influence of these conditions is not confined to theory. As I have already indicated, it deeply affects the practice of living, driving away esthetic perceptions that are necessary ingredients of happiness, or reducing them to the level of compensating transient pleasurable excitations.

Even to readers who are adversely inclined to what has been said, the implications of the statements that have been made may be useful in defining the nature of the problem: that of recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living. The understanding of art and of its role in civilization is not furthered by setting out with eulogies of it nor by occupying ourselves exclusively at the outset with great works of art recognized as such. The comprehen-

sion which theory essays will be arrived at by a detour; by going back to experience of the common or mill run of things to discover the esthetic quality such experience possesses. Theory can start with and from acknowledged works of art only when the esthetic is already compartmentalized, or only when works of art are set in a niche apart instead of being celebrations, recognized as such, of the things of ordinary experience. Even a crude experience, if authentically an experience, is more fit to give a clue to the intrinsic nature of esthetic experience than is an object already set apart from any other mode of experience. Following this clue we can discover how the work of art develops and accentuates what is characteristically valuable in things of everyday enjoyment. The art product will then be seen to issue from the latter, when the full meaning of ordinary experience is expressed, as dyes come out of coal tar products when they receive special treatment.

Many theories about art already exist. If there is justification for proposing yet another philosophy of the esthetic, it must be found in a new mode of approach. Combinations and permutations among existing theories can easily be brought forth by those so inclined. But, to my mind, the trouble with existing theories is that they start from a ready-made compartmentalization, or from a conception of art that "spiritualizes" it out of connection with the objects of concrete experience. The alternative, however, to such spiritualization is not a degrading and Philistine materialization of works of fine art, but a conception that discloses the way in which these works idealize qualities found in common experience. Were works of art placed in a directly human context in popular esteem, they would have a much wider appeal than they can have when pigeon-hole theories of art win general acceptance.

A conception of fine art that sets out from its connection with discovered qualities of ordinary experience will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favor the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value. It will also be able to point out those conditions that arrest its normal growth. Writers on esthetic theory often raise the question of whether esthetic philosophy can aid in cultivation of esthetic appreciation. The question is a branch of

the general theory of criticism, which, it seems to me, fails to accomplish its full office if it does not indicate what to look for and what to find in concrete esthetic objects. But, in any case, it is safe to say that a philosophy of art is sterilized unless it makes us aware of the function of art in relation to other modes of experience, and unless it indicates why this function is so inadequately realized, and unless it suggests the conditions under which the office would be successfully performed.

The comparison of the emergence of works of art out of ordinary experiences to the refining of raw materials into valuable products may seem to some unworthy, if not an actual attempt to reduce works of art to the status of articles manufactured for commercial purposes. The point, however, is that no amount of ecstatic eulogy of finished works can of itself assist the understanding or the generation of such works. Flowers can be enjoyed without knowing about the interactions of soil, air, moisture, and seeds of which they are the result. But they cannot be *understood* without taking just these interactions into account – and theory is a matter of understanding. Theory is concerned with discovering the nature of the production of works of art and of their enjoyment in perception. How is it that the everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic? How is it that our everyday enjoyment of scenes and situations develops into the peculiar satisfaction that attends the experience which is emphatically esthetic? These are the questions theory must answer. The answers cannot be found, unless we are willing to find the germs and roots in matters of experience that we do not currently regard as esthetic. Having discovered these active seeds, we may follow the course of their growth into the highest forms of finished and refined art. [. . .]

2. The Live Creature and “Ethereal Things”¹

Why is the attempt to connect the higher and ideal things of experience with basic vital roots so often regarded as betrayal of their nature and denial of their value? Why is there repulsion when the high achievements of fine art are brought into connection with common life, the

life that we share with all living creatures? Why is life thought of as an affair of low appetite, or at its best a thing of gross sensation, and ready to sink from its best to the level of lust and harsh cruelty? A complete answer to the question would involve the writing of a history of morals that would set forth the conditions that have brought about contempt for the body, fear of the senses, and the opposition of flesh to spirit.

One aspect of this history is so relevant to our problem that it must receive at least passing notice. The institutional life of mankind is marked by disorganization. This disorder is often disguised by the fact that it takes the form of static division into classes, and this static separation is accepted as the very essence of order as long as it is so fixed and so accepted as not to generate open conflict. Life is compartmentalized and the institutionalized compartments are classified as high and as low; their values as profane and spiritual, as material and ideal. Interests are related to one another externally and mechanically, through a system of checks and balances. Since religion, morals, politics, business has each its own compartment, within which it is fitting each should remain, art, too, must have its peculiar and private realm. Compartmentalization of occupations and interests brings about separation of that mode of activity commonly called “practice” from insight, of imagination from executive doing, of significant purpose from work, of emotion from thought and doing. Each of these has, too, its own place in which it must abide. Those who write the anatomy of experience then suppose that these divisions inhere in the very constitution of human nature.

Of much of our experience as it is actually lived under present economic and legal institutional conditions, it is only too true that these separations hold. Only occasionally in the lives of many are the senses fraught with the sentiment that comes from deep realization of intrinsic meanings. We undergo sensations as mechanical stimuli or as irritated stimulations, without having a sense of the reality that is in them and behind them: in much of our experience our different senses do not unite to tell a common and enlarged story. We see without feeling; we hear, but only a second-hand report, second hand because not reenforced by vision. We touch, but the contact remains tangential because it does not

fuse with qualities of senses that go below the surface. We use the senses to arouse passion but not to fulfill the interest of insight, not because that interest is not potentially present in the exercise of sense but because we yield to conditions of living that force sense to remain an excitation on the surface. Prestige goes to those who use their minds without participation of the body and who act vicariously through control of the bodies and labor of others.

Under such conditions, sense and flesh get a bad name. The moralist, however, has a truer sense of the intimate connections of sense with the rest of our being than has the professional psychologist and philosopher, although his sense of these connections takes a direction that reverses the potential facts of our living in relation to the environment. Psychologist and philosopher have in recent times been so obsessed with the problem of knowledge that they have treated "sensations" as mere elements of knowledge. The moralist knows that sense is allied with emotion, impulse and appetite. So he denounces the lust of the eye as part of the surrender of spirit to flesh. He identifies the sensuous with the sensual and the sensual with the lewd. His moral theory is askew, but at least he is aware that the eye is not an imperfect telescope designed for intellectual reception of material to bring about knowledge of distant objects.

"Sense" covers a wide range of contents: the sensory, the sensational, the sensitive, the sensible, and the sentimental, along with the sensuous. It includes almost everything from bare physical and emotional shock to sense itself – that is, the meaning of things present in immediate experience. Each term refers to some real phase and aspect of the life of an organic creature as life occurs through sense organs. But sense, as meaning so directly embodied in experience as to be its own illuminated meaning, is the only signification that expresses the function of sense organs when they are carried to full realization. The senses are the organs through which the live creature participates directly in the ongoings of the world about him. In this participation the varied wonder and splendor of this world are made actual for him in the qualities he experiences. This material cannot be opposed to action, for motor apparatus and "will" itself are the means by which this participation is carried on

and directed. It cannot be opposed to "intellect," for mind is the means by which participation is rendered fruitful through sense; by which meanings and values are extracted, retained, and put to further service in the intercourse of the live creature with his surroundings.

Experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication. Since sense-organs with their connected motor apparatus are the means of this participation, any and every derogation of them, whether practical or theoretical, is at once effect and cause of a narrowed and dulled life-experience. Oppositions of mind and body, soul and matter, spirit and flesh all have their origin, fundamentally, in fear of what life may bring forth. They are marks of contraction and withdrawal. Full recognition, therefore, of the continuity of the organs, needs and basic impulses of the human creature with his animal forbears, implies no necessary reduction of man to the level of the brutes. On the contrary, it makes possible the drawing of a ground-plan of human experience upon which is erected the superstructure of man's marvelous and distinguishing experience. What is distinctive in man makes it possible for him to sink below the level of the beasts. It also makes it possible for him to carry to new and unprecedented heights that unity of sense and impulse, of brain and eye and ear, that is exemplified in animal life, saturating it with the conscious meanings derived from communication and deliberate expression.

Man excels in complexity and minuteness of differentiations. This very fact constitutes the necessity for many more comprehensive and exact relationships among the constituents of his being. Important as are the distinctions and relations thus made possible, the story does not end here. There are more opportunities for resistance and tension, more drafts upon experimentation and invention, and therefore more novelty in action, greater range and depth of insight and increase of poignancy in feeling. As an organism increases in complexity, the rhythms of struggle and consummation in its relation to its environment are varied and prolonged, and they come to include within themselves an endless variety of sub-rhythms. The designs of living are widened

and enriched. Fulfillment is more massive and more subtly shaded.

Space thus becomes something more than a void in which to roam about, dotted here and there with dangerous things and things that satisfy the appetite. It becomes a comprehensive and enclosed scene within which are ordered the multiplicity of doings and undergoings in which man engages. Time ceases to be either the endless and uniform flow or the succession of instantaneous points which some philosophers have asserted it to be. It, too, is the organized and organizing medium of the rhythmic ebb and flow of expectant impulse, forward and retracted movement, resistance and suspense, with fulfillment and consummation. It is an ordering of growth and maturations – as James said, we learn to skate in summer after having commenced in winter. Time as organization in change is growth, and growth signifies that a varied series of change enters upon intervals of pause and rest; of completions that become the initial points of new processes of development. Like the soil, mind is fertilized while it lies fallow, until a new burst of bloom ensues.

When a flash of lightning illumines a dark landscape, there is a momentary recognition of objects. But the recognition is not itself a mere point in time. It is the focal culmination of long, slow processes of maturation. It is the manifestation of the continuity of an ordered temporal experience in a sudden discrete instant of climax. It is as meaningless in isolation as would be the drama of Hamlet were it confined to a single line or word with no context. But the phrase “the rest is silence” is infinitely pregnant as the conclusion of a drama enacted through development in time; so may be the momentary perception of a natural scene. Form, as it is present in the fine arts, is the art of making clear what is involved in the organization of space and time prefigured in every course of a developing life-experience.

Moments and places, despite physical limitation and narrow localization, are charged with accumulations of long-gathering energy. A return to a scene of childhood that was left long years before floods the spot with a release of pent-up memories and hopes. To meet in a strange country one who is a casual acquaintance at home may arouse a satisfaction so acute as to bring a thrill. Mere recognitions occur only when

we are occupied with something else than the object or person recognized. It marks either an interruption or else an intent to use what is recognized as a means for something else. To see, to perceive, is more than to recognize. It does not identify something present in terms of a past disconnected from it. The past is carried into the present so as to expand and deepen the content of the latter. There is illustrated the translation of bare continuity of external time into the vital order and organization of experience. Identification nods and passes on. Or it defines a passing moment in isolation, it marks a dead spot in experience that is merely filled in. The extent to which the process of living in any day or hour is reduced to labeling situations, events, and objects as “so-and-so” in mere succession marks the cessation of a life that is a conscious experience. Continuities realized in an individual, discrete, form are the essence of the latter.

Art is thus prefigured in the very processes of living. A bird builds its nest and a beaver its dam when internal organic pressures cooperate with external materials so that the former are fulfilled and the latter are transformed in a satisfying culmination. We may hesitate to apply the word “art,” since we doubt the presence of directive intent. But all deliberation, all conscious intent, grows out of things once performed organically through the interplay of natural energies. Were it not so, art would be built on quaking sands, nay, on unstable air. The distinguishing contribution of man is consciousness of the relations found in nature. Through consciousness, he converts the relations of cause and effect that are found in nature into relations of means and consequence. Rather, consciousness itself is the inception of such a transformation. What was mere shock becomes an invitation; resistance becomes something to be used in changing existing arrangements of matter; smooth facilities become agencies for executing an idea. In these operations, an organic stimulation becomes the bearer of meanings, and motor responses are changed into instruments of expression and communication; no longer are they mere means of locomotion and direct reaction. Meanwhile, the organic substratum remains as the quickening and deep foundation. Apart from relations of cause and effect in nature, conception and invention could not be. Apart from the relation of processes of

rhythmic conflict and fulfillment in animal life, experience would be without design and pattern. Apart from organs inherited from animal ancestry, idea and purpose would be without a mechanism of realization. The primeval arts of nature and animal life are so much the material, and, in gross outline, so much the model for the intentional achievements of man, that the theologically minded have imputed conscious intent to the structure of nature – as man, sharing many activities with the ape, is wont to think of the latter as imitating his own performances.

The existence of art is the concrete proof of what has just been stated abstractly. It is proof that man uses the materials and energies of nature with intent to expand his own life, and that he does so in accord with the structure of his organism – brain, sense-organs, and muscular system. Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature. The intervention of consciousness adds regulation, power of selection, and redispotion. Thus it varies the arts in ways without end. But its intervention also leads in time to the *idea* of art as a conscious idea – the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity.

The variety and perfection of the arts in Greece led thinkers to frame a generalized conception of art and to project the ideal of an art of organization of human activities as such – the art of politics and morals as conceived by Socrates and Plato. The ideas of design, plan, order, pattern, purpose emerged in distinction from and relation to the materials employed in their realization. The conception of man as the being that uses art became at once the ground of the distinction of man from the rest of nature and of the bond that ties him to nature. When the conception of art as the distinguishing trait of man was made explicit, there was assurance that, short of complete relapse of humanity below even savagery, the possibility of invention of new arts would remain, along with use of old arts, as the guiding ideal of mankind. Although recognition of the fact still halts, because of traditions established before the power of art was adequately recognized, science itself is but a central art auxiliary to the generation and utilization of other arts.²

It is customary, and from some points of view necessary, to make a distinction between fine art and useful or technological art. But the point of view from which it is necessary is one that is extrinsic to the work of art itself. The customary distinction is based simply on acceptance of certain existing social conditions. I suppose the fetiches of the Negro sculptor were taken to be useful in the highest degree to his tribal group, more so even than spears and clothing. But now they are fine art, serving in the twentieth century to inspire renovations in arts that had grown conventional. But they are fine art only because the anonymous artist lived and experienced so fully during the process of production. An angler may eat his catch without thereby losing the esthetic satisfaction he experienced in casting and playing. It is this degree of completeness of living in the experience of making and of perceiving that makes the difference between what is fine or esthetic in art and what is not. Whether the thing made is put to use, as are bowls, rugs, garments, weapons, is, *intrinsically* speaking, a matter of indifference. That many, perhaps most, of the articles and utensils made at present for use are not genuinely esthetic happens, unfortunately, to be true. But it is true for reasons that are foreign to the relation of the “beautiful” and “useful” as such. Wherever conditions are such as to prevent the act of production from being an experience in which the whole creature is alive and in which he possesses his living through enjoyment, the product will lack something of being esthetic. No matter how useful it is for special and limited ends, it will not be useful in the ultimate degree – that of contributing directly and liberally to an expanding and enriched life. The story of the severance and final sharp opposition of the useful and the fine is the history of that industrial development through which so much of production has become a form of postponed living and so much of consumption a superimposed enjoyment of the fruits of the labor of others. [. . .]

3. Having an Experience

Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living. Under conditions of resistance and conflict,

aspects and elements of the self and the world that are implicated in this interaction qualify experience with emotions and ideas so that conscious intent emerges. Oftentimes, however, the experience had is inchoate. Things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into *an* experience. There is distraction and dispersion; what we observe and what we think, what we desire and what we get, are at odds with each other. We put our hands to the plow and turn back; we start and then we stop, not because the experience has reached the end for the sake of which it was initiated but because of extraneous interruptions or of inner lethargy.

In contrast with such experience, we have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences. A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is *an* experience.

Philosophers, even empirical philosophers, have spoken for the most part of experience at large. Idiomatic speech, however, refers to experiences each of which is singular, having its own beginning and end. For life is no uniform uninterrupted march or flow. It is a thing of histories, each with its own plot, its own inception and movement toward its close, each having its own particular rhythmic movement; each with its own unrepeatable quality pervading it throughout. A flight of stairs, mechanical as it is, proceeds by individualized steps, not by undifferentiated progression, and an inclined plane is at least marked off from other things by abrupt discreteness.

Experience in this vital sense is defined by those situations and episodes that we spontaneously refer to as being "real experiences"; those things of which we say in recalling them, "that *was* an experience." It may have been something of tremendous importance – a quarrel with one who was once an intimate, a catastrophe finally averted by a hair's breadth. Or it may have been

something that in comparison was slight – and which perhaps because of its very slightness illustrates all the better what it is to be an experience. There is that meal in a Paris restaurant of which one says "that *was* an experience." It stands out as an enduring memorial of what food may be. Then there is that storm one went through in crossing the Atlantic – the storm that seemed in its fury, as it was experienced, to sum up in itself all that a storm can be, complete in itself, standing out because marked out from what went before and what came after.

In such experiences, every successive part flows freely, without seam and without unfilled blanks, into what ensues. At the same time there is no sacrifice of the self-identity of the parts. A river, as distinct from a pond, flows. But its flow gives a definiteness and interest to its successive portions greater than exist in the homogenous portions of a pond. In an experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself. The enduring whole is diversified by successive phases that are emphases of its varied colors.

Because of continuous merging, there are no holes, mechanical junctions, and dead centres when we have *an* experience. There are pauses, places of rest, but they punctuate and define the quality of movement. They sum up what has been undergone and prevent its dissipation and idle evaporation. Continued acceleration is breathless and prevents parts from gaining distinction. In a work of art, different acts, episodes, occurrences melt and fuse into unity, and yet do not disappear and lose their own character as they do so – just as in a genial conversation there is a continuous interchange and blending, and yet each speaker not only retains his own character but manifests it more clearly than is his wont.

An experience has a unity that gives it its name, *that* meal, that storm, that rupture of friendship. The existence of this unity is constituted by a single *quality* that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts. This unity is neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual, for these terms name distinctions that reflection can make within it. In discourse *about* an experience, we must make use of these adjectives of interpretation. In going over an experience in mind *after* its occurrence, we

may find that one property rather than another was sufficiently dominant so that it characterizes the experience as a whole. There are absorbing inquiries and speculations which a scientific man and philosopher will recall as "experiences" in the emphatic sense. In final import they are intellectual. But in their actual occurrence they were emotional as well; they were purposive and volitional. Yet the experience was not a sum of these different characters; they were lost in it as distinctive traits. No thinker can ply his occupation save as he is lured and rewarded by total integral experiences that are intrinsically worth while. Without them he would never know what it is really to think and would be completely at a loss in distinguishing real thought from the spurious article. Thinking goes on in trains of ideas, but the ideas form a train only because they are much more than what an analytic psychology calls ideas. They are phases, emotionally and practically distinguished, of a developing underlying quality; they are its moving variations, not separate and independent like Locke's and Hume's so-called ideas and impressions, but are subtle shadings of a pervading and developing hue.

We say of an experience of thinking that we reach or draw a conclusion. Theoretical formulation of the process is often made in such terms as to conceal effectually the similarity of "conclusion" to the consummating phase of every developing integral experience. These formulations apparently take their cue from the separate propositions that are premisses and the proposition that is the conclusion as they appear on the printed page. The impression is derived that there are first two independent and ready-made entities that are then manipulated so as to give rise to a third. In fact, in an experience of thinking, premisses emerge only as a conclusion becomes manifest. The experience, like that of watching a storm reach its height and gradually subside, is one of continuous movement of subject-matters. Like the ocean in the storm, there are a series of waves; suggestions reaching out and being broken in a clash, or being carried onwards by a cooperative wave. If a conclusion is reached, it is that of a movement of anticipation and cumulation, one that finally comes to completion. A "conclusion" is no separate and independent thing; it is the consummation of a movement.

Hence *an* experience of thinking has its own esthetic quality. It differs from those experiences that are acknowledged to be esthetic, but only in its materials. The material of the fine arts consists of qualities; that of experience having intellectual conclusion are signs or symbols having no intrinsic quality of their own, but standing for things that may in another experience be qualitatively experienced. The difference is enormous. It is one reason why the strictly intellectual art will never be popular as music is popular. Nevertheless, the experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement. This artistic structure may be immediately felt. In so far, it is esthetic. What is even more important is that not only is this quality a significant motive in undertaking intellectual inquiry and in keeping it honest, but that no intellectual activity is an integral event (is *an* experience), unless it is rounded out with this quality. Without it, thinking is inconclusive. In short, esthetic cannot be sharply marked off from intellectual experience since the latter must bear an esthetic stamp to be itself complete.

The same statement holds good of a course of action that is dominantly practical, that is, one that consists of overt doings. It is possible to be efficient in action and yet not have a conscious experience. The activity is too automatic to permit of a sense of what it is about and where it is going. It comes to an end but not to a close or consummation in consciousness. Obstacles are overcome by shrewd skill, but they do not feed experience. There are also those who are wavering in action, uncertain, and inconclusive like the shades in classic literature. Between the poles of aimlessness and mechanical efficiency, there lie those courses of action in which through successive deeds there runs a sense of growing meaning conserved and accumulating toward an end that is felt as accomplishment of a process. Successful politicians and generals who turn statesmen like Caesar and Napoleon have something of the showman about them. This of itself is not art, but it is, I think, a sign that interest is not exclusively, perhaps not mainly, held by the result taken by itself (as it is in the case of mere efficiency), but by it as the outcome of a process. There is

interest in completing an experience. The experience may be one that is harmful to the world and its consummation undesirable. But it has esthetic quality.

The Greek identification of good conduct with conduct having proportion, grace, and harmony, the *kalon-agathon*, is a more obvious example of distinctive esthetic quality in moral action. One great defect in what passes as morality is its anesthetic quality. Instead of exemplifying wholehearted action, it takes the form of grudging piecemeal concessions to the demands of duty. But illustrations may only obscure the fact that any practical activity will, provided that it is integrated and moves by its own urge to fulfillment, have esthetic quality.

A generalized illustration may be had if we imagine a stone, which is rolling down hill, to have an experience. The activity is surely sufficiently "practical." The stone starts from somewhere, and moves, as consistently as conditions permit, toward a place and state where it will be at rest – toward an end. Let us add, by imagination, to these external facts, the ideas that it looks forward with desire to the final outcome; that it is interested in the things it meets on its way, conditions that accelerate and retard its movement with respect to their bearing on the end; that it acts and feels toward them according to the hindering or helping function it attributes to them; and that the final coming to rest is related to all that went before as the culmination of a continuous movement. Then the stone would have an experience, and one with esthetic quality.

If we turn from this imaginary case to our own experience, we shall find much of it is nearer to what happens to the actual stone than it is to anything that fulfills the conditions fancy just laid down. For in much of our experience we are not concerned with the connection of one incident with what went before and what comes after. There is no interest that controls attentive rejection or selection of what shall be organized into the developing experience. Things happen, but they are neither definitely included nor decisively excluded; we drift. We yield according to external pressure, or evade and compromise. There are beginnings and cessations, but no genuine initiations and conclusions. One thing replaces another, but does not absorb it and carry it on.

There is experience, but so slack and discursive that it is not *an* experience. Needless to say, such experiences are anesthetic.

Thus the non-esthetic lies within two limits. At one pole is the loose succession that does not begin at any particular place and that ends – in the sense of ceasing – at no particular place. At the other pole is arrest, constriction, proceeding from parts having only a mechanical connection with one another. There exists so much of one and the other of these two kinds of experience that unconsciously they come to be taken as norms of all experience. Then, when the esthetic appears, it so sharply contrasts with the picture that has been formed of experience, that it is impossible to combine its special qualities with the features of the picture and the esthetic is given an outside place and status. The account that has been given of experience dominantly intellectual and practical is intended to show that there is no such contrast involved in having an experience; that, on the contrary, no experience of whatever sort is a unity unless it has esthetic quality.

The enemies of the esthetic are neither the practical nor the intellectual. They are the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure. Rigid abstinence, coerced submission, rightness on one side and dissipation, incoherence and aimless indulgence on the other, are deviations in opposite directions from the unity of an experience. Some such considerations perhaps induced Aristotle to invoke the "mean proportional" as the proper designation of what is distinctive of both virtue and the esthetic. He was formally correct. "Mean" and "proportion" are, however, not self-explanatory, nor to be taken over in a prior mathematical sense, but are properties belonging to an experience that has a developing movement toward its own consummation.

I have emphasized the fact that every integral experience moves toward a close, an ending, since it ceases only when the energies active in it have done their proper work. This closure of a circuit of energy is the opposite of arrest, of *stasis*. Maturation and fixation are polar opposites. Struggle and conflict may be themselves enjoyed, although they are painful, when they are experienced as means of developing an experience;

members in that they carry it forward, not just because they are there. There is, as will appear later, an element of undergoing, of suffering in its large sense, in every experience. Otherwise there would be no taking in of what preceded. For "taking in" in any vital experience is something more than placing something on the top of consciousness over what was previously known. It involves reconstruction which may be painful. Whether the necessary undergoing phase is by itself pleasurable or painful is a matter of particular conditions. It is indifferent to the total esthetic quality, save that there are few intense esthetic experiences that are wholly gleeful. They are certainly not to be characterized as amusing, and as they bear down upon us they involve a suffering that is none the less consistent with, indeed a part of, the complete perception that is enjoyed.

I have spoken of the esthetic quality that rounds out an experience into completeness and unity as emotional. The reference may cause difficulty. We are given to thinking of emotions as things as simple and compact as are the words by which we name them. Joy, sorrow, hope, fear, anger, curiosity, are treated as if each in itself were a sort of entity that enters full-made upon the scene, an entity that may last a long time or a short time, but whose duration, whose growth and career, is irrelevant to its nature. In fact emotions are qualities, when they are significant, of a complex experience that moves and changes. I say, when they are *significant*, for otherwise they are but the outbreaks and eruptions of a disturbed infant. All emotions are qualifications of a drama and they change as the drama develops. Persons are sometimes said to fall in love at first sight. But what they fall into is not a thing of that instant. What would love be were it compressed into a moment in which there is no room for cherishing and for solicitude? The intimate nature of emotion is manifested in the experience of one watching a play on the stage or reading a novel. It attends the development of a plot; and a plot requires a stage, a space, wherein to develop and time in which to unfold. Experience is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it.

By the same token, emotions are attached to events and objects in their movement. They are not, save in pathological instances, private. And

even an "objectless" emotion demands something beyond itself to which to attach itself, and thus it soon generates a delusion in lack of something real. Emotion belongs of a certainty to the self. But it belongs to the self that is concerned in the movement of events toward an issue that is desired or disliked. We jump instantaneously when we are scared, as we blush on the instant when we are ashamed. But fright and shamed modesty are not in this case emotional states. Of themselves they are but automatic reflexes. In order to become emotional they must become parts of an inclusive and enduring situation that involves concern for objects and their issues. The jump of fright becomes emotional fear when there is found or thought to exist a threatening object that must be dealt with or escaped from. The blush becomes the emotion of shame when a person connects, in thought, an action he has performed with an unfavorable reaction to himself or some other person.

Physical things from far ends of the earth are physically transported and physically caused to act and react upon one another in the construction of a new object. The miracle of mind is that something similar takes place in experience without physical transport and assembling. Emotion is the moving and cementing force. It selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar. It thus provides unity in and through the varied parts of an experience. When the unity is of the sort already described, the experience has esthetic character even though it is not, dominantly, an esthetic experience.

Two men meet; one is the applicant for a position, while the other has the disposition of the matter in his hands. The interview may be mechanical, consisting of set questions, the replies to which perfunctorily settle the matter. There is no experience in which the two men meet, nothing that is not a repetition, by way of acceptance or dismissal, of something which has happened a score of times. The situation is disposed of as if it were an exercise in bookkeeping. But an interplay may take place in which a new experience develops. Where should we look for an account of such an experience? Not to ledgers nor yet to a treatise on economics or sociology or personnel-psychology, but to drama or

fiction. Its nature and import can be expressed only by art, because there is a unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience. The *experience* is of material fraught with suspense and moving toward its own consummation through a connected series of varied incidents. The primary emotions on the part of the applicant may be at the beginning hope or despair, and elation or disappointment at the close. These emotions qualify the experience as a unity. But as the interview proceeds, secondary emotions are evolved as variations of the primary underlying one. It is even possible for each attitude and gesture, each sentence, almost every word, to produce more than a fluctuation in the intensity of the basic emotion; to produce, that is, a change of shade and tint in its quality. The employer sees by means of his own emotional reactions the character of the one applying. He projects him imaginatively into the work to be done and judges his fitness by the way in which the elements of the scene assemble and either clash or fit together. The presence and behavior of the applicant either harmonize with his own attitudes and desires or they conflict and jar. Such factors as these, inherently esthetic in quality, are the forces that carry the varied elements of the interview to a decisive issue. They enter into the settlement of every situation, whatever its dominant nature, in which there are uncertainty and suspense.

There are, therefore, common patterns in various experiences, no matter how unlike they are to one another in the details of their subject matter. There are conditions to be met without which an experience cannot come to be. The outline of the common pattern is set by the fact that every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives. A man does something; he lifts, let us say, a stone. In consequence he undergoes, suffers, something: the weight, strain, texture of the surface of the thing lifted. The properties thus undergone determine further doing. The stone is too heavy or too angular, not solid enough; or else the properties undergone show it is fit for the use for which it is intended. The process continues until a mutual adaptation of the self and the object emerges and that particular experience comes to a close. What is true of this simple instance is true, as to form, of every

experience. The creature operating may be a thinker in his study and the environment with which he interacts may consist of ideas instead of a stone. But interaction of the two constitutes the total experience that is had, and the close which completes it is the institution of a felt harmony.

An experience has pattern and structure, because it is not just doing and undergoing in alternation, but consists of them in relationship. To put one's hand in the fire that consumes it is not necessarily to have an experience. The action and its consequence must be joined in perception. This relationship is what gives meaning; to grasp it is the objective of all intelligence. The scope and content of the relations measure the significant content of an experience. A child's experience may be intense, but, because of lack of background from past experience, relations between undergoing and doing are slightly grasped, and the experience does not have great depth or breadth. No one ever arrives at such maturity that he perceives all the connections that are involved. There was once written (by Mr. Hinton) a romance called "The Unlearner." It portrayed the whole endless duration of life after death as a living over of the incidents that happened in a short life on earth, in continued discovery of the relationships involved among them.

Experience is limited by all the causes which interfere with perception of the relations between undergoing and doing. There may be interference because of excess on the side of doing or of excess on the side of receptivity, of undergoing. Unbalance on either side blurs the perception of relations and leaves the experience partial and distorted, with scant or false meaning. Zeal for doing, lust for action, leaves many a person, especially in this hurried and impatient human environment in which we live, with experience of an almost incredible paucity, all on the surface. No one experience has a chance to complete itself because something else is entered upon so speedily. What is called experience becomes so dispersed and miscellaneous as hardly to deserve the name. Resistance is treated as an obstruction to be beaten down, not as an invitation to reflection. An individual comes to seek, unconsciously even more than by deliberate choice, situations in which he can do the most things in the shortest time.

Experiences are also cut short from maturing by excess of receptivity. What is prized is then the mere undergoing of this and that, irrespective of perception of any meaning. The crowding together of as many impressions as possible is thought to be "life," even though no one of them is more than a flitting and a sipping. The sentimentalist and the day-dreamer may have more fancies and impressions pass through their consciousness than has the man who is animated by lust for action. But his experience is equally distorted, because nothing takes root in mind when there is no balance between doing and receiving. Some decisive action is needed in order to establish contact with the realities of the world and in order that impressions may be so related to facts that their value is tested and organized.

Because perception of relationship between what is done and what is undergone constitutes the work of intelligence, and because the artist is controlled in the process of his work by his grasp of the connection between what he has already done and what he is to do next, the idea that the artist does not think as intently and penetratingly as a scientific inquirer is absurd. A painter must consciously undergo the effect of his every brush stroke or he will not be aware of what he is doing and where his work is going. Moreover, he has to see each particular connection of doing and undergoing in relation to the whole that he desires to produce. To apprehend such relations is to think, and is one of the most exacting modes of thought. The difference between the pictures of different painters is due quite as much to differences of capacity to carry on this thought as it is to differences of sensitivity to bare color and to differences in dexterity of execution. As respects the basic quality of pictures, difference depends, indeed, more upon the quality of intelligence brought to bear upon perception of relations than upon anything else – though of course intelligence cannot be separated from direct sensitivity and is connected, though in a more external manner, with skill.

Any idea that ignores the necessary role of intelligence in production of works of art is based upon identification of thinking with use of one special kind of material, verbal signs and words. To think effectively in terms of relations of qualities is as severe a demand upon thought as to

think in terms of symbols, verbal and mathematical. Indeed, since words are easily manipulated in mechanical ways, the production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being "intellectuals."

I have tried to show in these chapters that the esthetic is no intruder in experience from without, whether by way of idle luxury or transcendent ideality, but that it is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience. This fact I take to be the only secure basis upon which esthetic theory can build. It remains to suggest some of the implications of the underlying fact.

We have no word in the English language that unambiguously includes what is signified by the two worlds "artistic" and "esthetic." Since "artistic" refers primarily to the act of production and "esthetic" to that of perception and enjoyment, the absence of a term designating the two processes taken together is unfortunate. Sometimes, the effect is to separate the two from each other, to regard art as something superimposed upon esthetic material, or, upon the other side, to an assumption that, since art is a process of creation, perception and enjoyment of it have nothing in common with the creative act. In any case, there is a certain verbal awkwardness in that we are compelled sometimes to use the term "esthetic" to cover the entire field and sometimes to limit it to the receiving perceptual aspect of the whole operation. I refer to these obvious facts as preliminary to an attempt to show how the conception of conscious experience as a perceived relation between doing and undergoing enables us to understand the connection that art as production and perception and appreciation as enjoyment sustain to each other.

Art denotes a process of doing or making. This is as true of fine as of technological art. Art involves molding of clay, chipping of marble, casting of bronze, laying on of pigments, construction of buildings, singing of songs, playing of instruments, enacting roles on the stage, going through rhythmic movements in the dance. Every art does something with some physical material, the body or something outside the body, with or

without the use of intervening tools, and with a view to production of something visible, audible, or tangible. So marked is the active or "doing" phase of art, that the dictionaries usually define it in terms of skilled action, ability in execution. The *Oxford Dictionary* illustrates by a quotation from John Stuart Mill: "Art is an endeavour after perfection in execution" while Matthew Arnold calls it "pure and flawless workmanship."

The word "esthetic" refers, as we have already noted, to experience as appreciative, perceiving, and enjoying. It denotes the consumer's rather than the producer's standpoint. It is *Gusto*, taste; and, as with cooking, overt skillful action is on the side of the cook who prepares, while taste is on the side of the consumer, as in gardening there is a distinction between the gardener who plants and tills and the householder who enjoys the finished product.

These very illustrations, however, as well as the relation that exists in having an experience between doing and undergoing, indicate that the distinction between esthetic and artistic cannot be pressed so far as to become a separation. Perfection in execution cannot be measured or defined in terms of execution; it implies those who perceive and enjoy the product that is executed. The cook prepares food for the consumer and the measure of the value of what is prepared is found in consumption. Mere perfection in execution, judged in its own terms in isolation, can probably be attained better by a machine than by human art. By itself, it is at most technique, and there are great artists who are not in the first ranks as technicians (witness Cézanne), just as there are great performers on the piano who are not great esthetically, and as Sargent is not a great painter.

Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be "loving"; it must care deeply for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised. A sculptor comes to mind whose busts are marvelously exact. It might be difficult to tell in the presence of a photograph of one of them and of a photograph of the original which was of the person himself. For virtuosity they are remarkable. But one doubts whether the maker of the busts had an experience of his own that he was concerned to have those share who look at his products. To be truly artistic, a work must also

be esthetic – that is, framed for enjoyed receptive perception. Constant observation is, of course, necessary for the maker while he is producing. But if his perception is not also esthetic in nature, it is a colorless and cold recognition of what has been done, used as a stimulus to the next step in a process that is essentially mechanical.

In short, art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience. Because of elimination of all that does not contribute to mutual organization of the factors of both action and reception into one another, and because of selection of just the aspects and traits that contribute to their interpenetration of each other, the product is a work of esthetic art. Man whittles, carves, sings, dances, gestures, molds, draws and paints. The doing or making is artistic when the perceived result is of such a nature that *its* qualities *as perceived* have controlled the question of production. The act of producing that is directed by intent to produce something that is enjoyed in the immediate experience of perceiving has qualities that a spontaneous or uncontrolled activity does not have. The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works.

Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that a finely wrought object, one whose texture and proportions are highly pleasing in perception, has been believed to be a product of some primitive people. Then there is discovered evidence that proves it to be an accidental natural product. As an external thing, it is now precisely what it was before. Yet at once it ceases to be a work of art and becomes a natural "curiosity." It now belongs in a museum of natural history, not in a museum of art. And the extraordinary thing is that the difference that is thus made is not one of just intellectual classification. A difference is made in appreciative perception and in a direct way. The esthetic experience – in its limited sense – is thus seen to be inherently connected with the experience of making.

The sensory satisfaction of eye and ear, when esthetic, is so because it does not stand by itself but is linked to the activity of which it is the consequence. Even the pleasures of the palate are different in quality to an epicure than in one who merely "likes" his food as he eats it. The

difference is not of mere intensity. The epicure is conscious of much more than the taste of the food. Rather, there enter into the taste, as directly experienced, qualities that depend upon reference to its source and its manner of production in connection with criteria of excellence. As production must absorb into itself qualities of the product as perceived and be regulated by them, so, on the other side, seeing, hearing, tasting, become esthetic when relation to a distinct manner of activity qualifies what is perceived.

There is an element of passion in all esthetic perception. Yet when we are overwhelmed by passion, as in extreme rage, fear, jealousy, the experience is definitely non-esthetic. There is no relationship felt to the qualities of the activity that has generated the passion. Consequently, the material of the experience lacks elements of balance and proportion. For these can be present only when, as in the conduct that has grace or dignity, the act is controlled by an exquisite sense of the relations which the act sustains – its fitness to the occasion and to the situation.

The process of art in production is related to the esthetic in perception organically – as the Lord God in creation surveyed his work and found it good. Until the artist is satisfied in perception with what he is doing, he continues shaping and reshaping. The making comes to an end when its result is experienced as good – and that experience comes not by mere intellectual and outside judgment but in direct perception. An artist, in comparison with his fellows, is one who is not only especially gifted in powers of execution but in unusual sensitivity to the qualities of things. This sensitivity also directs his doings and makings.

As we manipulate, we touch and feel; as we look, we see; as we listen, we hear. The hand moves with etching needle or with brush. The eye attends and reports the consequence of what is done. Because of this intimate connection, subsequent doing is cumulative and not a matter of caprice nor yet of routine. In an emphatic artistic-esthetic experience, the relation is so close that it controls simultaneously both the doing and the perception. Such vital intimacy of connection cannot be had if only hand and eye are engaged. When they do not, both of them, act as organs of the whole being, there is but a mechanical sequence of sense and movement, as in

walking that is automatic. Hand and eye, when the experience is esthetic, are but instruments through which the entire live creature, moved and active throughout, operates. Hence the expression is emotional and guided by purpose.

Because of the relation between what is done and what is undergone, there is an immediate sense of things in perception as belonging together or as jarring; as reenforcing or as interfering. The consequences of the act of making as reported in sense show whether what is done carries forward the idea being executed or marks a deviation and break. In as far as the development of an experience is *controlled* through reference to these immediately felt relations of order and fulfillment, that experience becomes dominantly esthetic in nature. The urge to action becomes an urge to that kind of action which will result in an object satisfying in direct perception. The potter shapes his clay to make a bowl useful for holding grain; but he makes it in a way so regulated by the series of perceptions that sum up the serial acts of making, that the bowl is marked by enduring grace and charm. The general situation remains the same in painting a picture or molding a bust. Moreover, at each stage there is anticipation of what is to come. This anticipation is the connecting link between the next doing and its outcome for sense. What is done and what is undergone are thus reciprocally, cumulatively, and continuously instrumental to each other.

The doing may be energetic, and the undergoing may be acute and intense. But unless they are related to each other to form a whole in perception, the thing done is not fully esthetic. The making for example may be a display of technical virtuosity, and the undergoing a gush of sentiment or a reverie. If the artist does not perfect a new vision in his process of doing, he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blue print in his mind. An incredible amount of observation and of the kind of intelligence that is exercised in perception of qualitative relations characterizes creative work in art. The relations must be noted not only with respect to one another, two by two, but in connection with the whole under construction; they are exercised in imagination as well as in observation. Irrelevancies arise that are tempting distractions; digressions suggest themselves in the guise of enrichments. There are occasions when the grasp

of the dominant idea grows faint, and then the artist is moved unconsciously to fill in until his thought grows strong again. The real work of an artist is to build up an experience that is coherent in perception while moving with constant change in its development.

When an author puts on paper ideas that are already clearly conceived and consistently ordered, the real work has been previously done. Or, he may depend upon the greater perceptibility induced by the activity and its sensible report to direct his completion of the work. The mere act of transcription is esthetically irrelevant save as it enters integrally into the formation of an experience moving to completeness. Even the composition conceived in the head and, therefore, physically private, is public in its significant content, since it is conceived with reference to execution in a product that is perceptible and hence belongs to the common world. Otherwise it would be an aberration or a passing dream. The urge to express through painting the perceived qualities of a landscape is continuous with demand for pencil or brush. Without external embodiment, an experience remains incomplete; physiologically and functionally, sense organs are motor organs and are connected, by means of distribution of energies in the human body and not merely anatomically, with other motor organs. It is no linguistic accident that "building," "construction," "work," designate both a process and its finished product. Without the meaning of the verb that of the noun remains blank.

Writer, composer of music, sculptor, or painter can retrace, during the process of production, what they have previously done. When it is not satisfactory in the undergoing or perceptual phase of experience, they can to some degree start afresh. This retracting is not readily accomplished in the case of architecture – which is perhaps one reason why there are so many ugly buildings. Architects are obliged to complete their idea before its translation into a complete object of perception takes place. Inability to build up simultaneously the idea and its objective embodiment imposes a handicap. Nevertheless, they too are obliged to think out their ideas in terms of the medium of embodiment and the object of ultimate perception unless they work mechanically and by rote. Probably the esthetic quality of

medieval cathedrals is due in some measure to the fact that their constructions were not so much controlled by plans and specifications made in advance as is now the case. Plans grew as the building grew. But even a Minerva-like product, if it is artistic, presupposes a prior period of gestation in which doings and perceptions projected in imagination interact and mutually modify one another. Every work of art follows the plan of, and pattern of, a complete experience, rendering it more intensely and concentratedly felt.

It is not so easy in the case of the perceiver and appreciator to understand the intimate union of doing and undergoing as it is in the case of the maker. We are given to supposing that the former merely takes in what is there in finished form, instead of realizing that this taking in involves activities that are comparable to those of the creator. But receptivity is not passivity. It, too, is a process consisting of a series of responsive acts that accumulate toward objective fulfillment. Otherwise, there is not perception but recognition. The difference between the two is immense. Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely. In recognition there is a beginning of an act of perception. But this beginning is not allowed to serve the development of a full perception of the thing recognized. It is arrested at the point where it will serve some *other* purpose, as we recognize a man on the street in order to greet or to avoid him, not so as to see him for the sake of seeing what is there.

In recognition we fall back, as upon a stereotype, upon some previously formed scheme. Some detail or arrangement of details serves as cue for bare identification. It suffices in recognition to apply this bare outline as a stencil to the present object. Sometimes in contact with a human being we are struck with traits, perhaps of only physical characteristics, of which we were not previously aware. We realize that we never knew the person before; we had not seen him in any pregnant sense. We now begin to study and to "take in." Perception replaces bare recognition. There is an act of reconstructive doing, and consciousness becomes fresh and alive. *This* act of seeing involves the cooperation of motor elements even though they remain implicit and do not become overt, as well as cooperation of all funded ideas that may serve to complete the new

picture that is forming. Recognition is too easy to arouse vivid consciousness. There is not enough resistance between new and old to secure consciousness of the experience that is had. Even a dog that barks and wags his tail joyously on seeing his master return is more fully alive in his reception of his friend than is a human being who is content with mere recognition.

Bare recognition is satisfied when a proper tag or label is attached, "proper" signifying one that serves a purpose outside the act of recognition – as a salesman identifies wares by a sample. It involves no stir of the organism, no inner commotion. But an act of perception proceeds by waves that extend serially throughout the entire organism. There is, therefore, no such thing in perception as seeing or hearing *plus* emotion. The perceived object or scene is emotionally pervaded throughout. When an aroused emotion does not permeate the material that is perceived or thought of, it is either preliminary or pathological.

The esthetic or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves surrender. But adequate yielding of the self is possible only through a controlled activity that may well be intense. In much of our intercourse with our surroundings we withdraw; sometimes from fear, if only of expending unduly our store of energy; sometimes from preoccupation with other matters, as in the case of recognition. Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it. When we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and, for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down. We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to *take* in.

Every one knows that it requires apprenticeship to see through a microscope or telescope, and to see a landscape as the geologist sees it. The idea that esthetic perception is an affair for odd moments is one reason for the backwardness of the arts among us. The eye and the visual apparatus may be intact; the object may be physically there, the cathedral of Notre Dame, or Rembrandt's portrait of Hendrickje Stoffels. In some bald sense, the latter may be "seen." They may be looked at, possibly recognized, and have their

correct names attached. But for lack of continuous interaction between the total organism and the objects, they are not perceived, certainly not esthetically. A crowd of visitors steered through a picture-gallery by a guide, with attention called here and there to some high point, does not perceive; only by accident is there even interest in seeing a picture for the sake of subject matter vividly realized.

For to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced. Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. In both, an act of abstraction, that is of extraction of what is significant, takes place. In both, there is comprehension in its literal signification – that is, a gathering together of details and particulars physically scattered into an experienced whole. There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear. His "appreciation" will be a mixture of scraps of learning with conformity to norms of conventional admiration and with a confused, even if genuine, emotional excitation.

The considerations that have been presented imply both the community and the unlikeness, because of specific emphasis, of *an* experience, in its pregnant sense, and esthetic experience. The former has esthetic quality; otherwise its materials would not be rounded out into a single coherent experience. It is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, emotional, and intellectual from one another and to set the properties of one over against the characteristics of the others. The emotional phase binds parts together into a single whole; "intellectual" simply names the fact that the experience has meaning;

"practical" indicates that the organism is interacting with events and objects which surround it. The most elaborate philosophic or scientific inquiry and the most ambitious industrial or political enterprise has, when its different ingredients constitute an integral experience, esthetic quality. For then its varied parts are linked to one another, and do not merely succeed one another. And the parts through their experienced linkage move toward a consummation and close, not merely to cessation in time. This consummation, moreover, does not wait in consciousness for the whole undertaking to be finished. It is anticipated throughout and is recurrently savored with special intensity.

Nevertheless, the experiences in question are dominantly intellectual or practical, rather than *distinctively* esthetic, because of the interest and purpose that initiate and control them. In an intellectual experience, the conclusion has value on its own account. It can be extracted as a formula or as a "truth," and can be used in its independent entirety as factor and guide in other inquiries. In a work of art there is no such single self-sufficient deposit. The end, the terminus, is significant not by itself but as the integration of the parts. It has no other existence. A drama or novel is not the final sentence, even if the characters are disposed of as living happily ever after. In a distinctively esthetic experience, characteristics that are subdued in other experiences are dominant; those that are subordinate are controlling – namely, the characteristics in virtue of which the experience is an integrated complete experience on its own account.

In every integral experience there is form because there is dynamic organization. I call the organization dynamic because it takes time to complete it, because it is a growth. There is inception, development, fulfillment. Material is ingested and digested through interaction with that vital organization of the results of prior experience that constitutes the mind of the worker. Incubation goes on until what is conceived is brought forth and is rendered perceptible as part of the common world. An esthetic experience can be crowded into a moment only in the sense that a climax of prior long enduring processes may arrive in an outstanding movement which so sweeps everything else into it that

all else is forgotten. That which distinguishes an experience as esthetic is conversion of resistance and tensions, of excitations that in themselves are temptations to diversion, into a movement toward an inclusive and fulfilling close.

Experiencing like breathing is a rhythm of intakings and outgivings. Their succession is punctuated and made a rhythm by the existence of intervals, periods in which one phase is ceasing and the other is inchoate and preparing. William James aptly compared the course of a conscious experience to the alternate flights and perchings of a bird. The flights and perchings are intimately connected with one another; they are not so many unrelated lightings succeeded by a number of equally unrelated hoppings. Each resting place in experience is an undergoing in which is absorbed and taken home the consequences of prior doing, and, unless the doing is that of utter caprice or sheer routine, each doing carries in itself meaning that has been extracted and conserved. As with the advance of an army, all gains from what has been already effected are periodically consolidated, and always with a view to what is to be done next. If we move too rapidly, we get away from the base of supplies – of accrued meanings – and the experience is flustered, thin, and confused. If we dawdle too long after having extracted a net value, experience perishes of inanition.

The *form* of the whole is therefore present in every member. Fulfilling, consummating, are continuous functions, not mere ends, located at one place only. An engraver, painter, or writer is in process of completing at every stage of his work. He must at each point retain and sum up what has gone before as a whole and with reference to a whole to come. Otherwise there is no consistency and no security in his successive acts. The series of doings in the rhythm of experience give variety and movement; they save the work from monotony and useless repetitions. The undergoings are the corresponding elements in the rhythm, and they supply unity; they save the work from the aimlessness of a mere succession of excitations. An object is peculiarly and dominantly esthetic, yielding the enjoyment characteristic of esthetic perception, when the factors that determine anything which can be called *an* experience are lifted high above the threshold of perception and are made manifest for their own sake.

Notes

- 1 The sun, the Moon, the Earth and its contents, are material to form greater things, that is, ethereal things – greater things than the Creator himself made. – JOHN KEATS.
- 2 I have developed this point in *Experience and Nature*,

in Chapter Nine, on Experience, Nature and Art. As far as the present point is concerned, the conclusion is contained in the statement that “art, the mode of activity that is charged with meanings capable of immediately enjoyed possession, is the complete culmination of nature, and that science is properly a handmaiden that conducts natural events to this happy issue.” (p. 358.) [*Later Works* 1:269.]

The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) was a German literary critic, who, when the Nazis took power, fled to Paris and, seven years later, took his own life to avoid capture when France fell. He viewed art not as an autonomous realm but as reflecting historical, political, and economic conditions.

Our fine arts were developed, their types and uses were established, in times very different from the present, by men whose power of action upon things was insignificant in comparison with ours. But the amazing growth of our techniques, the adaptability and precision they have attained, the ideas and habits they are creating, make it a certainty that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of the Beautiful. In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art.¹

—Paul Valéry, *Pièces sur l'art*, “La Conquête de l’ubiquité,” Paris.

Preface

When Marx undertook his critique of the capitalistic mode of production, this mode was in its infancy. Marx directed his efforts in such a way as

to give them prognostic value. He went back to the basic conditions underlying capitalistic production and through his presentation showed what could be expected of capitalism in the future.

Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” from *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn. © 1968, 1996 by Harcourt, Inc. Reproduced with permission of Houghton Mifflin and Penguin Random House.

The result was that one could expect it not only to exploit the proletariat with increasing intensity, but ultimately to create conditions which would make it possible to abolish capitalism itself.

The transformation of the superstructure, which takes place far more slowly than that of the substructure, has taken more than half a century to manifest in all areas of culture the change in the conditions of production. Only today can it be indicated what form this has taken. Certain prognostic requirements should be met by these statements. However, theses about the art of the proletariat after its assumption of power or about the art of a classless society would have less bearing on these demands than theses about the developmental tendencies of art under present conditions of production. Their dialectic is no less noticeable in the superstructure than in the economy. It would therefore be wrong to underestimate the value of such theses as a weapon. They brush aside a number of outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery – concepts whose uncontrolled (and at present almost uncontrollable) application would lead to a processing of data in the Fascist sense. The concepts which are introduced into the theory of art in what follows differ from the more familiar terms in that they are completely useless for the purposes of Fascism. They are, on the other hand, useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art.

I

In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Manmade artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new. Historically, it advanced intermittently and in leaps at long intervals, but with accelerated intensity. The Greek knew only two procedures of technically reproducing works of art: founding and stamping. Bronzes, terra cottas, and coins were the only art works which they could produce in quantity. All others were unique and could not be mechanically reproduced. With the woodcut graphic art became mechanically reproducible for the first time, long before script became

reproducible by print. The enormous changes which printing, the mechanical reproduction of writing, has brought about in literature are a familiar story. However, within the phenomenon which we are here examining from the perspective of world history, print is merely a special, though particularly important, case. During the Middle Ages engraving and etching were added to the woodcut; at the beginning of the nineteenth century lithography made its appearance.

With lithography the technique of reproduction reached an essentially new stage. This much more direct process was distinguished by the tracing of the design on a stone rather than its incision on a block of wood or its etching on a copperplate and permitted graphic art for the first time to put its products on the market, not only in large numbers as hitherto, but also in daily changing forms. Lithography enabled graphic art to illustrate everyday life, and it began to keep pace with printing. But only a few decades after its invention, lithography was surpassed by photography. For the first time in the process of pictorial reproduction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which henceforth devolved only upon the eye looking into a lens. Since the eye perceives more swiftly than the hand can draw, the process of pictorial reproduction was accelerated so enormously that it could keep pace with speech. A film operator shooting a scene in the studio captures the images at the speed of an actor's speech. Just as lithography virtually implied the illustrated newspaper, so did photography foreshadow the sound film. The technical reproduction of sound was tackled at the end of the last century. These convergent endeavors made predictable a situation which Paul Valéry pointed up in this sentence: "Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign" ([*"The Conquest of Ubiquity,"*] p. 226). Around 1900 technical reproduction had reached a standard that not only permitted it to reproduce all transmitted works of art and thus to cause the most profound change in their impact upon the public; it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes. For the study of this standard nothing is more revealing than the nature of the repercus-

sions that these two different manifestations – the reproduction of works of art and the art of the film – have had on art in its traditional form.

II

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership.² The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original.

The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. Chemical analyses of the patina of a bronze can help to establish this, as does the proof that a given manuscript of the Middle Ages stems from an archive of the fifteenth century. The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical – and, of course, not only technical – reproducibility.³ Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authority; not so *vis à vis* technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction. For example, in photography, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens, which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will. And photographic reproduction, with the aid of certain processes, such as enlargement or slow motion, can capture images which escape natural vision. Secondly, technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated. This holds not only for the art work but also, for instance, for a landscape which passes in review before the spectator in a movie. In the case of the art object, a most sensitive nucleus – namely, its authenticity – is interfered with whereas no natural object is vulnerable on that score. The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.⁴

One might subsume the eliminated element in the term “aura” and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage. This phenomenon is most palpable in the great historical films. It extends to ever new positions. In 1927 Abel Gance exclaimed enthusiastically: “Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Beethoven will make films . . . all legends, all mythologies and all myths, all founders of religion, and the very religions . . . await their exposed resurrection, and the heroes crowd each other at the gate.”⁵ Presumably without intending it, he issued an invitation to a far-reaching liquidation.

III

During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well. The fifth century, with its great shifts of population, saw the birth of the late Roman art industry and the Vienna Genesis, and there developed not only an art different from that of antiquity but also a new kind of perception. The scholars of the Viennese school, Riegl and Wickhoff, who resisted the weight of classical tradition under which these later art forms had been buried, were the first to draw conclusions from them concerning the organization of perception at the time. However far-reaching their insight, these scholars limited themselves to showing the significant, formal hallmark which characterized perception in late Roman times. They did not attempt – and, perhaps, saw no way – to show the social transformations expressed by these changes of perception. The conditions for an analogous insight are more favorable in the present. And if changes in the medium of contemporary perception can be comprehended as decay of the aura, it is possible to show its social causes.

The concept of aura which was proposed above with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience that aura of those mountains, of that branch. This image makes it easy to comprehend the social bases of the contemporary decay of the aura. It rests on two circumstances, both of which are related to the increasing significance of the masses in contemporary life. Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things “closer” spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.⁶ Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object

at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. Unmistakably, reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye. Uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former. To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose “sense of the universal equality of things” has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. Thus is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics. The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception.

IV

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura. Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function.⁷ In other words, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty.⁸ The secular cult of beauty, developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic basis in its decline and the first deep crisis which befell it. With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later.

At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of *L'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of "pure" art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter. (In poetry, Mallarmé was the first to take this position.)

An analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction must do justice to these relationships, for they lead us to an all-important insight: for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility.⁹ From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the "authentic" print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.

V

Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out: with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work.¹⁰ Artistic production begins with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult. One may assume that what mattered was their existence, not their being on view. The elk portrayed by the man of the Stone Age on the walls of his cave was an instrument of magic. He did expose it to his fellow men, but in the main it was meant for the spirits. Today the cult value would seem to demand that the work of art remain hidden. Certain statues of gods are accessible only to the priest in the cella; certain Madonnas remain covered nearly all year round; certain sculptures on medieval cathedrals are invisible to the spectator on ground level. With the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products. It is easier to exhibit a portrait bust that can be sent here and there than to exhibit the statue of a divinity that has its fixed place in the interior of a temple. The same holds for the painting as against the mosaic or

fresco that preceded it. And even though the public presentability of a mass originally may have been just as great as that of a symphony, the latter originated at the moment when its public presentability promised to surpass that of the mass.

With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature. This is comparable to the situation of the work of art in prehistoric times when, by the absolute emphasis on its cult value, it was, first and foremost, an instrument of magic. Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art. In the same way today, by the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental.¹¹ This much is certain: today photography and the film are the most serviceable exemplifications of this new function.

VI

In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value all along the line. But cult value does not give way without resistance. It retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. But as man withdraws from the photographic image, the exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value. To have pinpointed this new stage constitutes the incomparable significance of Atget, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has quite justly been said of him that he photographed them like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and

acquire a hidden political significance. They demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them. They stir the viewer; he feels challenged by them in a new way. At the same time picture magazines begin to put up signposts for him, right ones or wrong ones, no matter. For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And it is clear that they have an altogether different character than the title of a painting. The directives which the captions give to those looking at pictures in illustrated magazines soon become even more explicit and more imperative in the film where the meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones.

VII

The nineteenth-century dispute as to the artistic value of painting versus photography today seems devious and confused. This does not diminish its importance, however; if anything, it underlines it. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical transformation the universal impact of which was not realized by either of the rivals. When the age of mechanical reproduction separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its autonomy disappeared forever. The resulting change in the function of art transcended the perspective of the century; for a long time it even escaped that of the twentieth century, which experienced the development of the film.

Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised. Soon the film theoreticians asked the same ill-considered question with regard to the film. But the difficulties which photography caused traditional aesthetics were mere child's play as compared to those raised by the film. Whence the insensitive and forced character of early theories of the film. Abel Gance, for instance, compares the film with hieroglyphs: "Here, by a remarkable regression, we have come back to the level of expression of the Egyptians. . . . Pictorial language has not yet matured because our eyes have not yet adjusted to it. There is as yet insufficient respect for, insuffi-

cient cult of, what it expresses."¹² Or, in the words of Séverin-Mars: "What art has been granted a dream more poetical and more real at the same time! Approached in this fashion the film might represent an incomparable means of expression. Only the most high-minded persons, in the most perfect and mysterious moments of their lives, should be allowed to enter its ambience."¹³ Alexandre Arnoux concludes his fantasy about the silent film with the question: "Do not all the bold descriptions we have given amount to the definition of prayer?"¹⁴ It is instructive to note how their desire to class the film among the "arts" forces these theoreticians to read ritual elements into it – with a striking lack of discretion. Yet when these speculations were published, films like *L'Opinion publique* and *The Gold Rush* had already appeared. This, however, did not keep Abel Gance from adducing hieroglyphs for purposes of comparison, nor Séverin-Mars from speaking of the film as one might speak of paintings by Fra Angelico. Characteristically, even today ultrareactionary authors give the film a similar contextual significance – if not an outright sacred one, then at least a supernatural one. Commenting on Max Reinhardt's film version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Werfel states that undoubtedly it was the sterile copying of the exterior world with its streets, interiors, railroad stations, restaurants, motorcars, and beaches which until now had obstructed the elevation of the film to the realm of art. "The film has not yet realized its true meaning, its real possibilities . . . these consist in its unique faculty to express by natural means and with incomparable persuasiveness all that is fairylike, marvelous, supernatural."¹⁵

VIII

The artistic performance of a stage actor is definitely presented to the public by the actor in person; that of the screen actor, however, is presented by a camera, with a twofold consequence. The camera that presents the performance of the film actor to the public need not respect the performance as an integral whole. Guided by the cameraman, the camera continually changes its position with respect to the performance. The sequence of positional views which the editor

composes from the material supplied him constitutes the completed film. It comprises certain factors of movement which are in reality those of the camera, not to mention special camera angles, close-ups, etc. Hence, the performance of the actor is subjected to a series of optical tests. This is the first consequence of the fact that the actor's performance is presented by means of camera. Also, the film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to the audience during his performance, since he does not present his performance to the audience in person. This permits the audience to take the position of a critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor. The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing.¹⁶ This is not the approach to which cult values may be exposed.

IX

For the film, what matters primarily is that the actor represents himself to the public before the camera, rather than representing someone else. One of the first to sense the actor's metamorphosis by this form of testing was Pirandello. Though his remarks on the subject in his novel *Si Gira* were limited to the negative aspects of the question and to the silent film only, this hardly impairs their validity. For in this respect, the sound film did not change anything essential. What matters is that the part is acted not for an audience but for a mechanical contrivance – in the case of the sound film, for two of them. "The film actor," wrote Pirandello, "feels as if in exile – exiled not only from the stage but also from himself. With a vague sense of discomfort he feels inexplicable emptiness: his body loses its corporeality, it evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noises caused by his moving about, in order to be changed into a mute image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into silence. . . . The projector will play with his shadow before the public, and he himself must be content to play before the camera."¹⁷ This situation might also be characterized as follows: for the first time – and this is the effect of the film – man has to operate

with his whole living person, yet forgoing its aura. For aura is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it. The aura which, on the stage, emanates from Macbeth, cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor. However, the singularity of the shot in the studio is that the camera is substituted for the public. Consequently, the aura that envelops the actor vanishes, and with it the aura of the figure he portrays.

It is not surprising that it should be a dramatist such as Pirandello who, in characterizing the film, inadvertently touches on the very crisis in which we see the theater. Any thorough study proves that there is indeed no greater contrast than that of the stage play to a work of art that is completely subject to or, like the film, founded in, mechanical reproduction. Experts have long recognized that in the film "the greatest effects are almost always obtained by 'acting' as little as possible. . . ." In 1932 Rudolf Arnheim saw "the latest trend . . . in treating the actor as a stage prop chosen for its characteristics and . . . inserted at the proper place."¹⁸ With this idea something else is closely connected. The stage actor identifies himself with the character of his role. The film actor very often is denied this opportunity. His creation is by no means all of a piece; it is composed of many separate performances. Besides certain fortuitous considerations, such as cost of studio, availability of fellow players, décor, etc., there are elementary necessities of equipment that split the actor's work into a series of mountable episodes. In particular, lighting and its installation require the presentation of an event that, on the screen, unfolds as a rapid and unified scene, in a sequence of separate shootings which may take hours at the studio; not to mention more obvious montage. Thus a jump from the window can be shot in the studio as a jump from a scaffold, and the ensuing flight, if need be, can be shot weeks later when outdoor scenes are taken. Far more paradoxical cases can easily be construed. Let us assume that an actor is supposed to be startled by a knock at the door. If his reaction is not satisfactory, the director can resort to an expedient: when the actor happens to be at the studio again he has a shot fired behind him without his being forewarned of it. The frightened reaction can be shot now and be cut

into the screen version. Nothing more strikingly shows that art has left the realm of the "beautiful semblance" which, so far, had been taken to be the only sphere where art could thrive.

X

The feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before the camera, as Pirandello describes it, is basically of the same kind as the estrangement felt before one's own image in the mirror. But now the reflected image has become separable, transportable. And where is it transported? Before the public.¹⁹ Never for a moment does the screen actor cease to be conscious of this fact. While facing the camera he knows that ultimately he will face the public, the consumers who constitute the market. This market, where he offers not only his labor but also his whole self, his heart and soul, is beyond his reach. During the shooting he has as little contact with it as any article made in a factory. This may contribute to that oppression, that new anxiety which, according to Pirandello, grips the actor before the camera. The film responds to the shrivelling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the "personality" outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the "spell of the personality," the phony spell of a commodity. So long as the movie-makers' capital sets the fashion, as a rule no other revolutionary merit can be accredited to today's film than the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of traditional concepts of art. We do not deny that in some cases today's films can also promote revolutionary criticism of social conditions, even of the distribution of property. However, our present study is no more specifically concerned with this than is the film production of Western Europe.

It is inherent in the technique of the film as well as that of sports that everybody who witnesses its accomplishments is somewhat of an expert. This is obvious to anyone listening to a group of newspaper boys leaning on their bicycles and discussing the outcome of a bicycle race. It is not for nothing that newspaper publishers arrange races for their delivery boys. These arouse great interest among the participants, for the victor has an opportunity to rise from delivery

boy to professional racer. Similarly, the newsreel offers everyone the opportunity to rise from passer-by to movie extra. In this way any man might even find himself part of a work of art, as witness Vertoff's *Three Songs About Lenin* or Ivens' *Borinage*. Any man today can lay claim to being filmed. This claim can best be elucidated by a comparative look at the historical situation of contemporary literature.

For centuries a small number of writers were confronted by many thousands of readers. This changed toward the end of the last century. With the increasing extension of the press, which kept placing new political, religious, scientific, professional, and local organs before the readers, an increasing number of readers became writers – at first, occasional ones. It began with the daily press opening to its readers space for "letters to the editor." And today there is hardly a gainfully employed European who could not, in principle, find an opportunity to publish somewhere or other comments on his work, grievances, documentary reports, or that sort of thing. Thus, the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character. The difference becomes merely functional; it may vary from case to case. At any moment the reader is ready to turn into a writer. As expert, which he had to become willy-nilly in an extremely specialized work process, even if only in some minor respect, the reader gains access to authorship. In the Soviet Union work itself is given a voice. To present it verbally is part of a man's ability to perform the work. Literary license is now founded on polytechnic rather than specialized training and thus becomes common property.²⁰

All this can easily be applied to the film, where transitions that in literature took centuries have come about in a decade. In cinematic practice, particularly in Russia, this change-over has partially become established reality. Some of the players whom we meet in Russian films are not actors in our sense but people who portray *themselves* – and primarily in their own work process. In Western Europe the capitalistic exploitation of the film denies consideration to modern man's legitimate claim to being reproduced. Under these circumstances the film industry is trying hard to spur the interest of the masses through illusion-promoting spectacles and dubious speculations.

XI

The shooting of a film, especially of a sound film, affords a spectacle unimaginable anywhere at any time before this. It presents a process in which it is impossible to assign to a spectator a viewpoint which would exclude from the actual scene such extraneous accessories as camera equipment, lighting machinery, staff assistants, etc. – unless his eye were on a line parallel with the lens. This circumstance, more than any other, renders superficial and insignificant any possible similarity between a scene in the studio and one on the stage. In the theater one is well aware of the place from which the play cannot immediately be detected as illusionary. There is no such place for the movie scene that is being shot. Its illusionary nature is that of the second degree, the result of cutting. That is to say, in the studio the mechanical equipment has penetrated so deeply into reality that its pure aspect freed from the foreign substance of equipment is the result of a special procedure, namely, the shooting by the specially adjusted camera and the mounting of the shot together with other similar ones. The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice; the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology.

Even more revealing is the comparison of these circumstances, which differ so much from those of the theater, with the situation in painting. Here the question is: How does the cameraman compare with the painter? To answer this we take recourse to an analogy with a surgical operation. The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient's body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse, he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. In short, in contrast to the magician – who is still hidden in the medical practitioner – the surgeon at the decisive moment abstains from facing the patient man to man; rather,

it is though the operation that he penetrates into him.

Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web.²¹ There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art.

XII

Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. Such fusion is of great social significance. The greater the decrease in the social significance of an art form, the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, and the truly new is criticized with aversion. With regard to the screen, the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide. The decisive reason for this is that individual reactions are predetermined by the mass audience response they are about to produce, and this is nowhere more pronounced than in the film. The moment these responses become manifest they control each other. Again, the comparison with painting is fruitful. A painting has always had an excellent chance to be viewed by one person or by a few. The simultaneous contemplation of paintings by a large public, such as developed in the nineteenth century, is an early symptom of the crisis of painting, a crisis which was by no means occasioned exclusively by photography but rather in a relatively independent manner by the appeal of art works to the masses.

Painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie today. Although this circumstance in itself should not lead one to conclusions about the social role of painting, it does constitute a serious threat as soon as painting, under special conditions and, as it were, against its nature, is confronted directly by the masses. In the churches and monasteries of the Middle Ages and at the princely courts up to the end of the eighteenth century, a collective reception of paintings did not occur simultaneously, but by graduated and hierarchized mediation. The change that has come about is an expression of the particular conflict in which painting was implicated by the mechanical reproducibility of paintings. Although paintings began to be publicly exhibited in galleries and salons, there was no way for the masses to organize and control themselves in their reception.²² Thus the same public which responds in a progressive manner toward a grotesque film is bound to respond in a reactionary manner to surrealism.

XIII

The characteristics of the film lie not only in the manner in which man presents himself to mechanical equipment but also in the manner in which, by means of this apparatus, man can represent his environment. A glance at occupational psychology illustrates the testing capacity of the equipment. Psychoanalysis illustrates it in a different perspective. The film has enriched our field of perception with methods which can be illustrated by those of Freudian theory. Fifty years ago, a slip of the tongue passed more or less unnoticed. Only exceptionally may such a slip have revealed dimensions of depth in a conversation which had seemed to be taking its course on the surface. Since the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* things have changed. This book isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception. For the entire spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception the film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception. It is only an obverse of this fact that behavior items shown in a movie can be analyzed much

more precisely and from more points of view than those presented on paintings or on the stage. As compared with painting, filmed behavior lends itself more readily to analysis because of its incomparably more precise statements of the situation. In comparison with the stage scene, the filmed behavior item lends itself more readily to analysis because it can be isolated more easily. This circumstance derives its chief importance from its tendency to promote the mutual penetration of art and science. Actually, of a screened behavior item which is neatly brought out in a certain situation, like a muscle of a body, it is difficult to say which is more fascinating, its artistic value or its value for science. To demonstrate the identity of the artistic and scientific uses of photography which heretofore usually were separated will be one of the revolutionary functions of the film.²³

By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones "which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding, floating, supernatural motions."²⁴ Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye – if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the frac-

tional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.

XIV

One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later.²⁵ The history of every art form shows critical epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art form. The extravagances and crudities of art which thus appear, particularly in the so-called decadent epochs, actually arise from the nucleus of its richest historical energies. In recent years, such barbarisms were abundant in Dadaism. It is only now that its impulse becomes discernible: Dadaism attempted to create by pictorial – and literary – means the effects which the public today seeks in the film.

Every fundamentally new, pioneering creation of demands will carry beyond its goal. Dadaism did so to the extent that it sacrificed the market values which are so characteristic of the film in favor of higher ambitions – though of course it was not conscious of such intentions as here described. The Dadaists attached much less importance to the sales value of their work than to its uselessness for contemplative immersion. The studied degradation of their material was not the least of their means to achieve this uselessness. Their poems are “word salad” containing obscenities and every imaginable waste product of language. The same is true of their paintings, on which they mounted buttons and tickets. What they intended and achieved was a relentless destruction of the aura of their creations, which they branded as reproductions with the very means of production. Before a painting of Arp’s or a poem by August Stramm it is impossible to take time for contemplation and evaluation as

one would before a canvas of Derain’s or a poem by Rilke. In the decline of middle-class society, contemplation became a school for asocial behavior; it was countered by distraction as a variant of social conduct.²⁶ Dadaistic activities actually assured a rather vehement distraction by making works of art the center of scandal. One requirement was foremost: to outrage the public.

From an alluring appearance or persuasive structure of sound the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. It promoted a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator. Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested. Duhamel, who detests the film and knows nothing of its significance, though something of its structure, notes this circumstance as follows: “I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images.”²⁷ The spectator’s process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change. This constitutes the shock effect of the film, which, like all shocks, should be cushioned by heightened presence of mind.²⁸ By means of its technical structure, the film has taken the physical shock effect out of the wrappers in which Dadaism had, as it were, kept it inside the moral shock effect.²⁹

XV

The mass is a matrix from which all traditional behavior toward works of art issues today in a new form. Quantity has been transmuted into quality. The greatly increased mass of participants has produced a change in the mode of participation. The fact that the new mode of participation first appeared in a disreputable form must not confuse the spectator. Yet some people have launched spirited attacks against precisely this superficial aspect. Among these,

Duhamel has expressed himself in the most radical manner. What he objects to most is the kind of participation which the movie elicits from the masses. Duhamel calls the movie "a pastime for helots, a diversion for uneducated, wretched, worn-out creatures who are consumed by their worries . . . , a spectacle which requires no concentration and presupposes no intelligence . . . , which kindles no light in the heart and awakens no hope other than the ridiculous one of someday becoming a 'star' in Los Angeles."³⁰ Clearly, this is at bottom the same ancient lament that the masses seek distraction whereas art demands concentration from the spectator. That is a commonplace. The question remains whether it provides a platform for the analysis of the film. A closer look is needed here. Distraction and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as follows: A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. The laws of its reception are most instructive.

Buildings have been man's companions since primeval times. Many art forms have developed and perished. Tragedy begins with the Greeks, is extinguished with them, and after centuries its "rules" only are revived. The epic poem, which had its origin in the youth of nations, expires in Europe at the end of the Renaissance. Panel painting is a creation of the Middle Ages, and nothing guarantees its uninterrupted existence. But the human need for shelter is lasting. Architecture has never been idle. Its history is more ancient than that of any other art, and its claim to being a living force has significance in every attempt to comprehend the relationship of the masses to art. Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception – or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit

determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.

The distracted person, too, can form habits. More, the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction proves that their solution has become a matter of habit. Distraction as provided by art presents a covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception. Since, moreover, individuals are tempted to avoid such tasks, art will tackle the most difficult and most important one where it is able to mobilize the masses. Today it does so in the film. Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise. The film with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway. The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.

Epilogue

The growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two aspects of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves.³¹ The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. The violation of the masses, whom Fascism, with its *Führer* cult, forces to their knees, has its counterpart in the violation of an apparatus which pressed into the production of ritual values.

All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war. War and war only can set a goal for mass movements on the largest scale while respecting the traditional property system. This is the political formula for the situation. The technological formula may be stated as follows: Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today's technical resources while maintaining the property system. It goes without saying that the Fascist apotheosis of war does not employ such arguments. Still, Marinetti says in his manifesto on the Ethiopian colonial war: "For twenty-seven years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as antiaesthetic . . . Accordingly we state: . . . War is beautiful because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metalization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns. War is beautiful because it combines the gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony. War is beautiful because it creates new architecture, like that of the big tanks, the geometrical formation flights, the smoke spirals from burning villages, and many others . . . Poets and artists of Futurism! . . . remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art . . . may be illumined by them!"

This manifesto has the virtue of clarity. Its formulations deserve to be accepted by dialecticians. To the latter, the aesthetics of today's war appears as follows: If the natural utilization of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war. The destructiveness of war furnishes proof that society has not been mature enough to incorporate technology as its organ, that technology has not been sufficiently developed to cope with the elemental forces of society. The horrible features of imperialistic warfare are attributable to the discrepancy between the tremendous means of production and their inadequate utilization in the process of production – in other words, to unemployment and the lack of markets. Imperialistic war is a rebellion of technology which collects, in the form of "human material," the claims

to which society has denied its natural material. Instead of draining rivers, society directs a human stream into a bed of trenches; instead of dropping seeds from airplanes, it drops incendiary bombs over cities; and through gas warfare the aura is abolished in a new way.

"*Fiat ars – pereat mundus*," says Fascism, and, as Marinetti admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology. This is evidently the consummation of "*l'art pour l'art*." Mankind, which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.

Notes

- 1 Quoted from Paul Valéry, *Aesthetics*, "The Conquest of Ubiquity," translated by Ralph Manheim, p. 225. Pantheon Books, Bollingen Series, New York, 1964.
- 2 Of course, the history of a work of art encompasses more than this. The history of the "Mona Lisa," for instance, encompasses the kind and number of its copies made in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.
- 3 Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity. To develop such differentiations was an important function of the trade in works of art. The invention of the woodcut may be said to have struck at the root of the quality of authenticity even before its late flowering. To be sure, at the time of its origin a medieval picture of the Madonna could not yet be said to be "authentic." It became "authentic" only during the succeeding centuries and perhaps most strikingly so during the last one.
- 4 The poorest provincial staging of *Faust* is superior to a *Faust* film in that, ideally, it competes with the first performance at Weimar. Before the screen it is unprofitable to remember traditional contents which might come to mind before the stage – for instance, that Goethe's friend Johann Heinrich Merck is hidden in Mephisto, and the like.
- 5 Abel Gance, "Le Temps de l'image est venu," *L'Art cinématographique*, Vol. 2, pp. 94f., Paris, 1927.
- 6 To satisfy the human interest of the masses may mean to have one's social function removed from

the field of vision. Nothing guarantees that a portraitist of today, when painting a famous surgeon at the breakfast table in the midst of his family, depicts his social function more precisely than a painter of the 17th century who portrayed his medical doctors as representing this profession, like Rembrandt in his "Anatomy Lesson."

- 7 The definition of the aura as a "unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be" represents nothing but the formulation of the cult value of the work of art in categories of space and time perception. Distance is the opposite of closeness. The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image. True to its nature, it remains "distant, however close it may be." The closeness which one may gain from its subject matter does not impair the distance which it retains in its appearance.
- 8 To the extent to which the cult value of the painting is secularized the ideas of its fundamental uniqueness lose distinctness. In the imagination of the beholder the uniqueness of the phenomena which hold sway in the cult image is more and more displaced by the empirical uniqueness of the creator or of his creative achievement. To be sure, never completely so; the concept of authenticity always transcends mere genuineness. (This is particularly apparent in the collector who always retains some traces of the fetishist and who, by owning the work of art, shares in its ritual power.) Nevertheless, the function of the concept of authenticity remains determinate in the evaluation of art; with the secularization of art, authenticity displaces the cult value of the work.
- 9 In the case of films, mechanical reproduction is not, as with literature and painting, an external condition for mass distribution. Mechanical reproduction is inherent in the very technique of film production. This technique not only permits in the most direct way but virtually causes mass distribution. It enforces distribution because the production of a film is so expensive that an individual who, for instance, might afford to buy a painting no longer can afford to buy a film. In 1927 it was calculated that a major film, in order to pay its way, had to reach an audience of nine million. With the sound film, to be sure, a setback in its international distribution occurred at first: audiences became limited by language barriers. This coincided with the Fascist emphasis on national interests. It is more important to focus on this connection with Fascism than on this setback, which was soon minimized by synchronization. The simultaneity of both phenomena is attributable to the depression. The same distur-

bances which, on a larger scale, led to an attempt to maintain the existing property structure by sheer force led the endangered film capital to speed up the development of the sound film. The introduction of the sound film brought about a temporary relief, not only because it again brought the masses into the theaters but also because it merged new capital from the electrical industry with that of the film industry. Thus, viewed from the outside, the sound film promoted national interests, but seen from the inside it helped to internationalize film production even more than previously.

- 10 This polarity cannot come into its own in the aesthetics of Idealism. Its idea of beauty comprises these polar opposites without differentiating between them and consequently excludes their polarity. Yet in Hegel this polarity announces itself as clearly as possible within the limits of Idealism. We quote from his *Philosophy of History*:

Images were known of old. Piety at an early time required them for worship, but it could do without *beautiful* images. These might even be disturbing. In every beautiful painting there is also something nonspiritual, merely external, but its spirit speaks to man through its beauty. Worshipping, conversely, is concerned with the work as an object, for it is but a spiritless stupor of the soul. . . . Fine art has arisen . . . in the church . . . , although it has already gone beyond its principle as art.

Likewise, the following passage from *The Philosophy of Fine Art* indicates that Hegel sensed a problem here.

We are beyond the stage of reverence for works of art as divine and objects deserving our worship. The impression they produce is one of a more reflective kind, and the emotions they arouse require a higher test . . ." – G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, trans., with notes, by F. P. B. Osmaston, Vol. I, p. 12, London, 1920.

The transition from the first kind of artistic reception to the second characterizes the history of artistic reception in general. Apart from that, a certain oscillation between these two polar modes of reception can be demonstrated for each work of art. Take the Sistine Madonna. Since Hubert Grimme's research it has been known that the Madonna originally was painted for the purpose of exhibition. Grimme's research was inspired by the question: What is the purpose of the molding in the foreground of the painting which the two

cupids lean upon? How, Grimme asked further, did Raphael come to furnish the sky with two draperies? Research proved that the Madonna had been commissioned for the public lying-in-state of Pope Sixtus. The Popes lay in state in a certain side chapel of St. Peter's. On that occasion Raphael's picture had been fastened in a nichelike background of the chapel, supported by the coffin. In this picture Raphael portrays the Madonna approaching the papal coffin in clouds from the background of the niche, which was demarcated by green drapes. At the obsequies of Sixtus a pre-eminent exhibition value of Raphael's picture was taken advantage of. Some time later it was placed on the high altar in the church of the Black Friars at Piacenza. The reason for this exile is to be found in the Roman rites which forbid the use of paintings exhibited at obsequies as cult objects on the high altar. This regulation devalued Raphael's picture to some degree. In order to obtain an adequate price nevertheless, the Papal See resolved to add to the bargain the tacit toleration of the picture above the high altar. To avoid attention the picture was given to the monks of the far-off provincial town.

- 11 Bertolt Brecht, on a different level, engaged in analogous reflections: "If the concept of 'work of art' can no longer be applied to the thing that emerges once the work is transformed into a commodity, we have to eliminate this concept with cautious care but without fear, lest we liquidate the function of the very thing as well. For it has to go through this phase without mental reservation, and not as noncommittal deviation from the straight path; rather, what happens here with the work of art will change it fundamentally and erase its past to such an extent that should the old concept be taken up again – and it will, why not? – it will no longer stir any memory of the thing it once designated."
- 12 Abel Gance, ["Le Temps de l'image,"] pp. 100–1.
- 13 Séverin-Mars, quoted by Abel Gance, ["Le Temps de l'image,"] p. 100.
- 14 Alexandre Arnoux, *Cinéma pris*, 1929, p. 28.
- 15 Franz Werfel, "Ein Sommernachtstraum, Ein Film von Shakespeare und Reinhardt," *Neues Wiener Journal*, cited in *Lu* 15, November, 1935.
- 16 "The film . . . provides – or could provide – useful insight into the details of human actions . . . Character is never used as a source of motivation; the inner life of the persons never supplies the principal cause of the plot and seldom is its main result." (Bertolt Brecht, *Versuche*, "Der Dreigroschenprozess," p. 268.) The expansion of the field of the testable which mechanical equipment brings about for the actor corresponds to the extraordi-

nary expansion of the field of the testable brought about for the individual through economic conditions. Thus, vocational aptitude tests become constantly more important. What matters in these tests are segmental performances of the individual. The film shot and the vocational aptitude test are taken before a committee of experts. The camera director in the studio occupies a place identical with that of the examiner during aptitude tests.

- 17 Luigi Pirandello, *Si Gira*, quoted by Léon Pierre-Quint, "Signification du cinéma," *L'Art cinématographique*, Vol. 2, pp. 14–15.
- 18 Rudolf Arnheim, *Film als Kunst*, Berlin, 1932, pp. 176f. In this context certain seemingly unimportant details in which the film director deviates from stage practices gain in interest. Such is the attempt to let the actor play without make-up, as made among others by Dreyer in his *Jeanne d'Arc*. Dreyer spent months seeking the forty actors who constitute the Inquisitors' tribunal. The search for these actors resembled that for stage properties that are hard to come by. Dreyer made every effort to avoid resemblances of age, build, and physiognomy. If the actor thus becomes a stage property, this latter, on the other hand, frequently functions as actor. At least it is not unusual for the film to assign a role to the stage property. Instead of choosing at random from a great wealth of examples, let us concentrate on a particularly convincing one. A clock that is working will always be a disturbance on the stage. There it cannot be permitted its function of measuring time. Even in a naturalistic play, astronomical time would clash with theatrical time. Under these circumstances it is highly revealing that the film can, whenever appropriate, use time as measured by a clock. From this more than from many other touches it may clearly be recognized that under certain circumstances each and every prop in a film may assume important functions. From here it is but one step to Pudovkin's statement that "the playing of an actor which is connected with an object and is built around it . . . is always one of the strongest methods of cinematic construction." (W. Pudovkin, *Filmregie und Filmmanuskript*, Berlin, 1928, p. 126.) The film is the first art form capable of demonstrating how matter plays tricks on man. Hence, films can be an excellent means of materialistic representation.
- 19 The change noted here in the method of exhibition caused by mechanical reproduction applies to politics as well. The present crisis of the bourgeois democracies comprises a crisis of the conditions which determine the public presentation of the rulers. Democracies exhibit a member of government directly and personally before the nation's

representatives. Parliament is his public. Since the innovations of camera and recording equipment make it possible for the orator to become audible and visible to an unlimited number of persons, the presentation of the man of politics before camera and recording equipment becomes paramount. Parliaments, as much as theaters, are deserted. Radio and film not only affect the function of the professional actor but likewise the function of those who also exhibit themselves before this mechanical equipment, those who govern. Though their tasks may be different, the change affects equally the actor and the ruler. The trend is toward establishing controllable and transferrable skills under certain social conditions. This results in a new selection, a selection before the equipment from which the star and the dictator emerge victorious.

- 20 The privileged character of the respective techniques is lost. Aldous Huxley writes:

Advances in technology have led . . . to vulgarity. . . . Process reproduction and the rotary press have made possible the indefinite multiplication of writing and pictures. Universal education and relatively high wages have created an enormous public who know how to read and can afford to buy reading and pictorial matter. A great industry has been called into existence in order to supply these commodities. Now, artistic talent is a very rare phenomenon; whence it follows . . . that, at every epoch and in all countries, most art has been bad. But the proportion of trash in the total artistic output is greater now than at any other period. That it must be so is a matter of simple arithmetic. The population of Western Europe has a little more than doubled during the last century. But the amount of reading – and seeing – matter has increased, I should imagine, at least twenty and possibly fifty or even a hundred times. If there were n men of talent in a population of x millions, there will presumably be $2n$ men of talent among $2x$ millions. The situation may be summed up thus. For every page of print and pictures published a century ago, twenty or perhaps even a hundred pages are published today. But for every man of talent then living, there are now only two men of talent. It may be of course that, thanks to universal education, many potential talents which in the past would have been still-born are now enabled to realize themselves. Let us assume, then, that there are now three or even four men of talent to every one of earlier times. It still remains true to say that the consumption of reading – and seeing

– matter has far outstripped the natural production of gifted writers and draughtsmen. It is the same with hearing-matter. Prosperity, the gramophone and the radio have created an audience of hearers who consume an amount of hearing-matter that has increased out of all proportion to the increase of population and the consequent natural increase of talented musicians. It follows from all this that in all the arts the output of trash is both absolutely and relatively greater than it was in the past; and that it must remain greater for just so long as the world continues to consume the present inordinate quantities of reading-matter, seeing-matter, and hearing-matter.” – Aldous Huxley, *Beyond the Mexique Bay. A Traveller's Journal*, London, 1949, pp. 274ff. First published in 1934.

This mode of observation is obviously not progressive.

- 21 The boldness of the cameraman is indeed comparable to that of the surgeon. Luc Durtain lists among specific technical sleights of hand those “which are required in surgery in the case of certain difficult operations. I choose as an example a case from oto-rhino-laryngology; . . . the so-called endonasal perspective procedure; or I refer to the acrobatic tricks of larynx surgery which have to be performed following the reversed picture in the laryngoscope. I might also speak of ear surgery which suggests the precision work of watchmakers. What range of the most subtle muscular acrobatics is required from the man who wants to repair or save the human body! We have only to think of the couching of a cataract where there is virtually a debate of steel with nearly fluid tissue, or of the major abdominal operations (laparotomy).” – Luc Durtain [. . .].
- 22 This mode of observation may seem crude, but as the great theoretician Leonardo has shown, crude modes of observation may at times be usefully adduced. Leonardo compares painting and music as follows: “Painting is superior to music because, unlike unfortunate music, it does not have to die as soon as it is born . . . Music which is consumed in the very act of its birth is inferior to painting which the use of varnish has rendered eternal.” (Trattato I, 29.)
- 23 Renaissance painting offers a revealing analogy to this situation. The incomparable development of this art and its significance rested not least on the integration of a number of new sciences, or at least of new scientific data. Renaissance painting made use of anatomy and perspective, of mathematics, meteorology, and chromatology. Valéry writes:

"What could be further from us than the strange claim of a Leonardo to whom painting was a supreme goal and the ultimate demonstration of knowledge? Leonardo was convinced that painting demanded universal knowledge, and he did not even shrink from a theoretical analysis which to us is stunning because of its very depth and precision . . ." – Paul Valéry, *Pièces sur l'art*, "Autour de Corot," Paris, p. 191.

24 Rudolf Arnheim, *Film als Kunst*, p. 138.

25 "The work of art," says André Breton, "is valuable only in so far as it is vibrated by the reflexes of the future." Indeed, every developed art form intersects three lines of development. Technology works toward a certain form of art. Before the advent of the film there were photo booklets with pictures which flitted by the onlooker upon pressure of the thumb, thus portraying a boxing bout or a tennis match. Then there were the slot machines in bazaars; their picture sequences were produced by the turning of a crank.

Secondly, the traditional art forms in certain phases of their development strenuously work toward effects which later are effortlessly attained by the new ones. Before the rise of the movie the Dadaists' performances tried to create an audience reaction which Chaplin later evoked in a more natural way.

Thirdly, unspectacular social changes often promote a change in receptivity which will benefit the new art form. Before the movie had begun to create its public, pictures that were no longer immobile captivated an assembled audience in the so-called *Kaiserpanorama*. Here the public assembled before a screen into which stereoscopes were mounted, one to each beholder. By a mechanical process individual pictures appeared briefly before the stereoscopes, then made way for others. Edison still had to use similar devices in presenting the first movie strip before the film screen and projection were known. This strip was presented to a small public which stared into the apparatus in which the succession of pictures was reeling off. Incidentally, the institution of the *Kaiserpanorama* shows very clearly a dialectic of the development. Shortly before the movie turned the reception of pictures into a collective one, the individual viewing of pictures in these swiftly outmoded establishments came into play once more with an intensity comparable to that of the ancient priest beholding the statue of a divinity in the cella.

26 The theological archetype of this contemplation is the awareness of being alone with one's God. Such

awareness, in the heyday of the bourgeoisie, went to strengthen the freedom to shake off clerical tutelage. During the decline of the bourgeoisie this awareness had to take into account the hidden tendency to withdraw from public affairs those forces which the individual draws upon in his communion with God.

27 Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*, Paris, 1930, p. 52.

28 The film is the art form that is in keeping with the increased threat to his life which modern man has to face. Man's need to expose himself to shock effects is his adjustment to the dangers threatening him. The film corresponds to profound changes in the apperceptive apparatus – changes that are experienced on an individual scale by the man in the street in big-city traffic, on a historical scale by every present-day citizen.

29 As for Dadaism, insights important for Cubism and Futurism are to be gained from the movie. Both appear as deficient attempts of art to accommodate the pervasion of reality by the apparatus. In contrast to the film, these schools did not try to use the apparatus as such for the artistic presentation of reality, but aimed at some sort of alloy in the joint presentation of reality and apparatus. In Cubism, the premonition that this apparatus will be structurally based on optics plays a dominant part; in Futurism, it is the premonition of the effects of this apparatus which are brought out by the rapid sequence of the film strip.

30 Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*, p. 58.

31 One technical feature is significant here, especially with regard to newsreels, the propagandist importance of which can hardly be overestimated. Mass reproduction is aided especially by the reproduction of masses. In big parades and monster rallies, in sports events, and in war, all of which nowadays are captured by camera and sound recording, the masses are brought face to face with themselves. This process, whose significance need not be stressed, is intimately connected with the development of the techniques of reproduction and photography. Mass movements are usually discerned more clearly by a camera than by the naked eye. A bird's-eye view best captures gatherings of hundreds of thousands. And even though such a view may be as accessible to the human eye as it is to the camera, the image received by the eye cannot be enlarged the way a negative is enlarged. This means that mass movements, including war, constitute a form of human behavior which particularly favors mechanical equipment.

The Origin of the Work of Art

Martin Heidegger

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was a German philosopher who was a professor at the University of Freiburg. His political relationships have been much discussed as he was an active member of the Nazi regime; nonetheless his philosophical influence remains important.

Origin here means that from and by which something is what it is and as it is. What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature. The origin of something is the source of its nature. The question concerning the origin of the work of art asks about the source of its nature. On the usual view, the work arises out of and by means of the activity of the artist. But by what and whence is the artist what he is? By the work; for to say that the work does credit to the master means that it is the work that first lets the artist emerge as a master of his art. The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work *are* each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely that which also gives artist and work of art their names – art. [. . .]

[. . .] [T]he question of the origin of the work of art becomes a question about the nature of art.

Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art” from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: HarperCollins, 1971, pp. 17–36, 38–39, 41–46, 48–52, 55–59, 64–66, 69–71, 77–78. Reproduced with permission of Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

Since the question whether and how art in general exists must still remain open, we shall attempt to discover the nature of art in the place where art undoubtedly prevails in a real way. Art is present in the art work. But what and how is a work of art? [. . .]

Works of art are familiar to everyone. Architectural and sculptural works can be seen installed in public places, in churches, and in dwellings. Art works of the most diverse periods and peoples are housed in collections and exhibitions. If we consider the works in their untouched actuality and do not deceive ourselves, the result is that the works are as naturally present as are things. The picture hangs on the wall like a rifle or a hat. A painting, e.g., the one by Van Gogh that represents a pair of peasant shoes, travels from one exhibition to another. Works of art are shipped like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest. During the First World War Hölderlin’s hymns were packed in the soldier’s knapsack together with cleaning gear. Beethoven’s quartets lie in the storerooms of the publishing house like potatoes in a cellar.

All works have this thingly character. What would they be without it? But perhaps this rather crude and external view of the work is objectionable to us. Shippers or charwomen in

museums may operate with such conceptions of the work of art. We, however, have to take works as they are encountered by those who experience and enjoy them. But even the much-vaunted aesthetic experience cannot get around the thingly aspect of the art work. There is something stony in a work of architecture, wooden in a carving, colored in a painting, spoken in a linguistic work, sonorous in a musical composition. The thingly element is so irremovably present in the art work that we are compelled rather to say conversely that the architectural work is in stone, the carving is in wood, the painting in color, the linguistic work in speech, the musical composition in sound. "Obviously," it will be replied. No doubt. But what is this self-evident thingly element in the work of art? [. . .]

Our aim is to arrive at the immediate and full reality of the work of art, for only in this way shall we discover real art also within it. Hence we must first bring to view the thingly element of the work. To this end it is necessary that we should know with sufficient clarity what a thing is. Only then can we say whether the art work is a thing, but a thing to which something else adheres; only then can we decide whether the work is at bottom something else and not a thing at all.

Thing and Work

What in truth is the thing, so far as it is a thing? When we inquire in this way, our aim is to come to know the thing-being (thingness) of the thing. The point is to discover the thingly character of the thing. To this end we have to be acquainted with the sphere to which all those entities belong which we have long called by the name of thing.

The stone in the road is a thing, as is the clod in the field. A jug is a thing, as is the well beside the road. But what about the milk in the jug and the water in the well? These too are things if the cloud in the sky and the thistle in the field, the leaf in the autumn breeze and the hawk over the wood, are rightly called by the name of thing. All these must indeed be called things, if the name is applied even to that which does not, like those just enumerated, show itself, i.e., that which does not appear. According to Kant, the whole of the world, for example, and even God himself, is a

thing of this sort, a thing that does not itself appear, namely, a "thing-in-itself." In the language of philosophy both things-in-themselves and things that appear, all beings that in any way are, are called things.

Airplanes and radio sets are nowadays among the things closest to us, but when we have ultimate things in mind we think of something altogether different. Death and judgment – these are ultimate things. On the whole the word "thing" here designates whatever is not simply nothing. In this sense the work of art is also a thing, so far as it is not simply nothing. Yet this concept is of no use to us, at least immediately, in our attempt to delimit entities that have the mode of being of a thing, as against those having the mode of being of a work. And besides, we hesitate to call God a thing. In the same way we hesitate to consider the peasant in the field, the stoker at the boiler, the teacher in the school as things. A man is not a thing. It is true that we speak of a young girl who is faced with a task too difficult for her as being a young thing, still too young for it, but only because we feel that being human is in a certain way missing here and think that instead we have to do here with the factor that constitutes the thingly character of things. We hesitate even to call the deer in the forest clearing, the beetle in the grass, the blade of grass a thing. We would sooner think of a hammer as a thing, or a shoe, or an ax, or a clock. But even these are not mere things. Only a stone, a clod of earth, a piece of wood are for us such mere things. Lifeless beings of nature and objects of use. Natural things and utensils are the things commonly so called.

We thus see ourselves brought back from the widest domain, within which everything is a thing (thing = *res* = *ens* = an entity), including even the highest and last things, to the narrow precinct of mere things. "Mere" here means, first, the pure thing, which is simply a thing and nothing more; but then, at the same time, it means that which is only a thing, in an almost pejorative sense. It is mere things, excluding even use-objects, that count as things in the strict sense. What does the thingly character of these things, then, consist in? It is in reference to these that the thingness of things must be determinable. This determination enables us to characterize what it is that is thingly as such. Thus prepared,

we are able to characterize the almost palpable reality of works, in which something else inheres. [...]

The interpretations of the thingness of the thing which, predominant in the course of Western thought, have long become self-evident and are now in everyday use, may be reduced to three.

This block of granite, for example, is a mere thing. It is hard, heavy, extended, bulky, shapeless, rough, colored, partly dull, partly shiny. We can take note of all these features in the stone. Thus we acknowledge its characteristics. But still, the traits signify something proper to the stone itself. They are its properties. The thing has them. The thing? What are we thinking of when we now have the thing in mind? Obviously a thing is not merely an aggregate of traits, nor an accumulation of properties by which that aggregate arises. A thing, as everyone thinks he knows, is that around which the properties have assembled. We speak in this connection of the core of things. [...]

Our reliance on the current interpretation of the thing is only seemingly well founded. But in addition this thing-concept (the thing as bearer of its characteristics) holds not only of the mere thing in its strict sense, but also of any being whatsoever. Hence it cannot be used to set apart thingly beings from non-thingly beings. Yet even before all reflection, attentive dwelling within the sphere of things already tells us that this thing-concept does not hit upon the thingly element of the thing, its independent and self-contained character. Occasionally we still have the feeling that violence has long been done to the thingly element of things and that thought has played a part in this violence, for which reason people disavow thought instead of taking pains to make it more thoughtful. But in defining the nature of the thing, what is the use of a feeling, however certain, if thought alone has the right to speak here? Perhaps however what we call feeling or mood, here and in similar instances, is more reasonable – that is, more intelligently perceptive – because more open to Being than all that reason which, having meanwhile become *ratio*, was misinterpreted as being rational. The hankering after the irrational, as abortive offspring of the unthought rational, therewith performed a curious service. To be sure, the current thing-

concept always fits each thing. Nevertheless it does not lay hold of the thing as it is in its own being, but makes an assault upon it.

Can such an assault perhaps be avoided – and how? Only, certainly, by granting the thing, as it were, a free field to display its thingly character directly. Everything that might interpose itself between the thing and us in apprehending and talking about it must first be set aside. Only then do we yield ourselves to the undisguised presence of the thing. But we do not need first to call or arrange for this situation in which we let things encounter us without mediation. The situation always prevails. In what the senses of sight, hearing, and touch convey, in the sensations of color, sound, roughness, hardness, things move us bodily, in the literal meaning of the word. The thing is the *aistheton*, that which is perceptible by sensations in the senses belonging to sensibility. Hence the concept later becomes a commonplace according to which a thing is nothing but the unity of a manifold of what is given in the senses. Whether this unity is conceived as sum or as totality or as form alters nothing in the standard character of this thing-concept.

Now this interpretation of the thingness of the thing is as correct and demonstrable in every case as the previous one. This already suffices to cast doubt on its truth. If we consider moreover what we are searching for, the thingly character of the thing, then this thing-concept again leaves us at a loss. We never really first perceive a throng of sensations, e.g., tones and noises, in the appearance of things – as this thing-concept alleges; rather we hear the storm whistling in the chimney, we hear the three-motored plane, we hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagen. Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds. In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e., listen abstractly.

In the thing-concept just mentioned there is not so much an assault upon the thing as rather an inordinate attempt to bring it into the greatest possible proximity to us. But a thing never reaches that position as long as we assign as its thingly feature what is perceived by the senses. Whereas the first interpretation keeps the thing at arm's length from us, as it were, and sets it too far off,

the second makes it press too hard upon us. In both interpretations the thing vanishes. It is therefore necessary to avoid the exaggerations of both. The thing itself must be allowed to remain in its self-containment. It must be accepted in its own constancy. This the third interpretation seems to do, which is just as old as the first two.

That which gives things their constancy and pith but is also at the same time the source of their particular mode of sensuous pressure – colored, resonant, hard, massive – is the matter in things. In this analysis of the thing as matter (*hule*), form (*morphe*) is already coposited. What is constant in a thing, its consistency, lies in the fact that matter stands together with a form. The thing is formed matter. This interpretation appeals to the immediate view with which the thing solicits us by its looks (*eidos*). In this synthesis of matter and form a thing-concept has finally been found which applies equally to things of nature and to use-objects.

This concept puts us in a position to answer the question concerning the thingly element in the work of art. The thingly element is manifestly the matter of which it consists. Matter is the substrate and field for the artist's formative action. But we could have advanced this obvious and well-known definition of the thingly element at the very outset. Why do we make a detour through other current thing-concepts? Because we also mistrust this concept of the thing, which represents it as formed matter.

But is not precisely this pair of concepts, matter-form, usually employed in the domain in which we are supposed to be moving? To be sure. The distinction of matter and form is *the conceptual schema which is used, in the greatest variety of ways, quite generally for all art theory and aesthetics*. This incontestable fact, however, proves neither that the distinction of matter and form is adequately founded, nor that it belongs originally to the domain of art and the art work. Moreover, the range of application of this pair of concepts has long extended far beyond the field of aesthetics. Form and content are the most hackneyed concepts under which anything and everything may be subsumed. And if form is correlated with the rational and matter with the irrational; if the rational is taken to be the logical and the irrational the alogical; if in addition the subject-object relation is coupled with the conceptual pair

form-matter; then representation has at its command a conceptual machinery that nothing is capable of withstanding.

If, however, it is thus with the distinction between matter and form, how then shall we make use of it to lay hold of the particular domain of mere things by contrast with all other entities? But perhaps this characterization in terms of matter and form would recover its defining power if only we reversed the process of expanding and emptying these concepts. Certainly, but this presupposes that we know in what sphere of beings they realize their true defining power. That this is the domain of mere things is so far only an assumption. Reference to the copious use made of this conceptual framework in aesthetics might sooner lead to the idea that matter and form are specifications stemming from the nature of the art work and were in the first place transferred from it back to the thing. Where does the matter-form structure have its origin – in the thingly character of the thing or in the workly character of the art work?

The self-contained block of granite is something material in a definite if unshapely form. Form means here the distribution and arrangement of the material parts in spatial locations, resulting in a particular shape, namely that of a block. But a jug, an ax, a shoe are also matter occurring in a form. Form as shape is not the consequence here of a prior distribution of the matter. The form, on the contrary, determines the arrangement of the matter. Even more, it prescribes in each case the kind and selection of the matter – impermeable for a jug, sufficiently hard for an ax, firm yet flexible for shoes. The interfusion of form and matter prevailing here is, moreover, controlled beforehand by the purposes served by jug, ax, shoes. Such usefulness is never assigned or added on afterward to a being of the type of a jug, ax, or pair of shoes. But neither is it something that floats somewhere above it as an end.

Usefulness is the basic feature from which this entity regards us, that is, flashes at us and thereby is present and thus is this entity. Both the formative act and the choice of material – a choice given with the act – and therewith the dominance of the conjunction of matter and form, are all grounded in such usefulness. A being that falls under usefulness is always the product of a

process of making. It is made as a piece of equipment for something. As determination of beings, accordingly, matter and form have their proper place in the essential nature of equipment. This name designates what is produced expressly for employment and use. Matter and form are in no case original determinations of the thingness of the mere thing.

A piece of equipment, a pair of shoes for instance, when finished, is also self-contained like the mere thing, but it does not have the character of having taken shape by itself like the granite boulder. On the other hand, equipment displays an affinity with the art work insofar as it is something produced by the human hand. However, by its self-sufficient presence the work of art is similar rather to the mere thing which has taken shape by itself and is self-contained. Nevertheless we do not count such works among mere things. As a rule it is the use-objects around us that are the nearest and authentic things. Thus the piece of equipment is half thing, because characterized by thingliness, and yet it is something more; at the same time it is half art work and yet something less, because lacking the self-sufficiency of the art work. Equipment has a peculiar position intermediate between thing and work, assuming that such a calculated ordering of them is permissible. [. . .]

The situation stands revealed as soon as we speak of things in the strict sense as mere things. The "mere," after all, means the removal of the character of usefulness and of being made. The mere thing is a sort of equipment, albeit equipment denuded of its equipmental being. Thing-being consists in what is then left over. But this remnant is not actually defined in its ontological character. It remains doubtful whether the thingly character comes to view at all in the process of stripping off everything equipmental. Thus the third mode of interpretation of the thing, that which follows the lead of the matter-form structure, also turns out to be an assault upon the thing.

These three modes of defining thingness conceive of the thing as a bearer of traits, as the unity of a manifold of sensations, as formed matter. [. . .] [W]e risk the attempt to bring to view and express in words the thingly character of the thing, the equipmental character of equipment, and the workly character of the work. To this end,

however, only one element is needful: to keep at a distance all the preconceptions and assaults of the above modes of thought, to leave the thing to rest in its own self, for instance, in its thing-being. What seems easier than to let a being be just the being that it is? Or does this turn out to be the most difficult of tasks, particularly if such an intention – to let a being be as it is – represents the opposite of the indifference that simply turns its back upon the being itself in favor of an unexamined concept of being? We ought to turn toward the being, think about it in regard to its being, but by means of this thinking at the same time let it rest upon itself in its very own being.

This exertion of thought seems to meet with its greatest resistance in defining the thingness of the thing; for where else could the cause lie of the failure of the efforts mentioned? The unpretentious thing evades thought most stubbornly. Or can it be that this self-refusal of the mere thing, this self-contained independence, belongs precisely to the nature of the thing? Must not this strange and uncommunicative feature of the nature of the thing become intimately familiar to thought that tries to think the thing? If so, then we should not force our way to its thingly character.

That the thingness of the thing is particularly difficult to express and only seldom expressible is infallibly documented by the history of its interpretation indicated above. This history coincides with the destiny in accordance with which Western thought has hitherto thought the Being of beings. However, not only do we now establish this point; at the same time we discover a clue in this history. Is it an accident that in the interpretation of the thing the view that takes matter and form as guide attains to special dominance? This definition of the thing derives from an interpretation of the equipmental being of equipment. And equipment, having come into being through human making, is particularly familiar to human thinking. At the same time, this familiar being has a peculiar intermediate position between thing and work. We shall follow this clue and search first for the equipmental character of equipment. [. . .]

We choose as example a common sort of equipment – a pair of peasant shoes. We do not even need to exhibit actual pieces of this sort of useful article in order to describe them. Everyone

is acquainted with them. But since it is a matter here of direct description, it may be well to facilitate the visual realization of them. For this purpose a pictorial representation suffices. We shall choose a well-known painting by Van Gogh, who painted such shoes several times. But what is there to see here? Everyone knows what shoes consist of. If they are not wooden or bast shoes, there will be leather soles and uppers, joined together by thread and nails. Such gear serves to clothe the feet. Depending on the use to which the shoes are to be put, whether for work in the field or for dancing, matter and form will differ.

Such statements, no doubt correct, only explicate what we already know. The equipmental quality of equipment consists in its usefulness. But what about this usefulness itself? In conceiving it, do we already conceive along with it the equipmental character of equipment? In order to succeed in doing this, must we not look out for useful equipment in its use? The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only here are they what they are. They are all the more genuinely so, the less the peasant woman thinks about the shoes while she is at work, or looks at them at all, or is even aware of them. She stands and walks in them. That is how shoes actually serve. It is in this process of the use of equipment that we must actually encounter the character of equipment.

As long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover what the equipmental being of the equipment in truth is. From Van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes stand. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they might belong – only an undefined space. There are not even clods of soil from the field or the field-path sticking to them, which would at least hint at their use. A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet –

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift

of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself.

But perhaps it is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes. The peasant woman, on the other hand, simply wears them. If only this simple wearing were so simple. When she takes off her shoes late in the evening in deep but healthy fatigue, and reaches out for them again in the still dim dawn, or passes them by on the day of rest, she knows all this without noticing or reflecting. The equipmental quality of the equipment consists indeed in its usefulness. But this usefulness itself rests in the abundance of an essential being of the equipment. We call it reliability. By virtue of this reliability the peasant woman is made privy to the silent call of the earth; by virtue of the reliability of the equipment she is sure of her world. World and earth exist for her, and for those who are with her in her mode of being, only thus – in the equipment. We say “only” and therewith fall into error; for the reliability of the equipment first gives to the simple world its security and assures to the earth the freedom of its steady thrust.

The equipmental being of equipment, reliability, keeps gathered within itself all things according to their manner and extent. The usefulness of equipment is nevertheless only the essential consequence of reliability. The former vibrates in the latter and would be nothing without it. A single piece of equipment is worn out and used up; but at the same time the use itself also falls into disuse, wears away, and becomes usual. Thus equipmentality wastes away, sinks into mere stuff. In such wasting, reliability vanishes. This dwindling, however, to which use-things owe their boringly obtrusive usualness, is only one more testimony to the original nature of equipmental being. The worn-out usualness of the equipment then obtrudes itself as the sole mode of being, apparently peculiar to it exclusively. Only blank usefulness now remains visible. It awakens the

impression that the origin of equipment lies in a mere fabricating that impresses a form upon some matter. Nevertheless in its genuinely equipmental being, equipment stems from a more distant source. Matter and form and their distinction have a deeper origin.

The repose of equipment resting within itself consists in its reliability. Only in this reliability do we discern what equipment in truth is. But we still know nothing of what we first sought: the thing's thingly character. And we know nothing at all of what we really and solely seek: the workly character of the work in the sense of the work of art.

Or have we already learned something unwittingly, in passing so to speak, about the work-being of the work?

The equipmental quality of equipment was discovered. But how? Not by a description and explanation of a pair shoes actually present; not by a report about the process of making shoes; and also not by the observation of the actual use of shoes occurring here and there; but only by bringing ourselves before Van Gogh's painting. This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be.

The art work let us know what shoes are in truth. It would be the worst self-deception to think that our description, as a subjective action, had first depicted everything thus and then projected it into the painting. If anything is questionable here, it is rather that we experienced too little in the neighborhood of the work and that we expressed the experience too crudely and too literally. But above all, the work did not, as it might seem at first, serve merely for a better visualizing of what a piece of equipment is. Rather, the equipmentality of equipment first genuinely arrives at its appearance through the work and only in the work.

What happens here? What is at work in the work? Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth. This entity emerges into the unconcealedness of its being. The Greeks called the unconcealedness of beings *aletheia*. We say "truth" and think little enough in using this word. If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work.

In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work "To set" means here: to bring to a stand. Some particular entity, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its being. The being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining.

The nature of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work. [. . .]

We seek the reality of the art work in order to find there the art prevailing within it. The thingly substructure is what proved to be the most immediate reality in the work. But to comprehend this thingly feature the traditional thing-concepts are not adequate; for they themselves fail to grasp the nature of the thing. The currently predominant thing-concept, thing as formed matter, is not even derived from the nature of the thing but from the nature of equipment. It also turned out that equipmental being generally has long since occupied a peculiar preeminence in the interpretation of beings. This preeminence of equipmentality, which however did not actually come to mind, suggested that we pose the question of equipment anew while avoiding the current interpretations.

We allowed a work to tell us what equipment is. By this means, almost clandestinely, it came to light what is at work in the work: the disclosure of the particular being in its being, the happening of truth. If, however, the reality of the work can be defined solely by means of what is at work in the work, then what about our intention to seek out the real art work in its reality? As long as we supposed that the reality of the work lay primarily in its thingly substructure we were going astray. We are now confronted by a remarkable result of our considerations – if it still deserves to be called a result at all. Two points become clear:

First: the dominant thing-concepts are inadequate as means of grasping the thingly aspect of the work.

Second: what we tried to treat as the most immediate reality of the work, its thingly substructure, does not belong to the work in that way at all.

As soon as we look for such a thingly substructure in the work, we have unwittingly taken the work as equipment, to which we then also ascribe a superstructure supposed to contain its artistic quality. But the work is not a piece of equipment

that is fitted out in addition with an aesthetic value that adheres to it. The work is no more anything of the kind than the bare thing is a piece of equipment that merely lacks the specific equipmental characteristics of usefulness and being made.

Our formulation of the question of the work has been shaken because we asked, not about the work but half about a thing and half about equipment. Still, this formulation of the question was not first developed by us. It is the formulation native to aesthetics. The way in which aesthetics views the art work from the outset is dominated by the traditional interpretation of all beings. But the shaking of this accustomed formulation is not the essential point. What matters is a first opening of our vision to the fact that what is workly in the work, equipmental in equipment, and thingly in the thing comes closer to us only when we think the Being of beings. To this end it is necessary beforehand that the barriers of our preconceptions fall away and that the current pseudo concepts be set aside. That is why we had to take this detour. But it brings us directly to a road that may lead to a determination of the thingly feature in the work. The thingly feature in the work should not be denied; but if it belongs admittedly to the work-being of the work, it must be conceived by way of the work's workly nature. If this is so, then the road toward the determination of the thingly reality of the work leads not from thing to work but from work to thing.

The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e., this deconcealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work. In the art work, the truth of what is has set itself to work. Art is truth setting itself to work. What is truth itself, that it sometimes comes to pass as art? What is this setting-itself-to-work?

The Work and Truth

[...] Where does a work belong? The work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself. For the work-being of the work is present in, and only in, such opening up. We said that in the work there was a happening of truth at work. The reference to Van Gogh's picture tried to point to this happening. With

regard to it there arose the question as to what truth is and how truth can happen.

We now ask the question of truth with a view to the work. But in order to become more familiar with what the question involves, it is necessary to make visible once more the happening of truth in the work. For this attempt let us deliberately select a work that cannot be ranked as representational art.

A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley. The building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of the god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct. The temple and its precinct, however, do not fade away into the indefinite. It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from and in this expanse does the nation first return to itself for the fulfillment of its vocation.

Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rock's clumsy yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The luster and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first brings to light the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea. Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are. The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*. It clears and illuminates, also, that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth*. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea

of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In the things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent.

The temple-work, standing there, opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on earth, which itself only thus emerges as native ground. But men and animals, plants and things, are never present and familiar as unchangeable objects, only to represent incidentally also a fitting environment for the temple, which one fine day is added to what is already there. We shall get closer to what *is*, rather, if we think of all this in reverse order, assuming of course that we have, to begin with, an eye for how differently everything then faces us. Mere reversing, done for its own sake, reveals nothing.

The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves. This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it. It is the same with the sculpture of the god, votive offering of the victor in the athletic games. It is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus *is* the god himself. The same holds for the linguistic work. In the tragedy nothing is staged or displayed theatrically, but the battle of the new gods against the old is being fought. The linguistic work, originating in the speech of the people, does not refer to this battle; it transforms the people's saying so that now every living word fights the battle and puts up for decision what is holy and what unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave (cf. Heraclitus, Fragment 53).

In what, then, does the work-being of the work consist? Keeping steadily in view the points just crudely enough indicated, two essential features of the work may for the moment be brought out more distinctly. We set out here, from the long familiar foreground of the work's being, the thingly character which gives support to our customary attitude toward the work.

When a work is brought into a collection or placed in an exhibition we say also that it is "set up." But this setting up differs essentially from

setting up in the sense of erecting a building, raising a statue, presenting a tragedy at a holy festival. Such setting up is erecting in the sense of dedication and praise. Here "setting up" no longer means a bare placing. To dedicate means to consecrate, in the sense that in setting up the work the holy is opened up as holy and the god is invoked into the openness of his presence. Praise belongs to dedication as doing honor to the dignity and splendor of the god. Dignity and splendor are not properties beside and behind which the god, too, stands as something distinct, but it is rather in the dignity, in the splendor that the god is present. In the reflected glory of this splendor there glows, i.e., there lightens itself, what we called the word. To e-rect means: to open the right in the sense of a guiding measure, a form in which what belongs to the nature of being gives guidance. But why is the setting up of a work an erecting that consecrates and praises? Because the work, in its work-being, demands it. How is it that the work comes to demand such a setting up? Because it itself, in its own work-being, is something that sets up. What does the work, as work, set up? Towering up within itself, the work opens up a *world* and keeps it abidingly in force.

To be a work means to set up a world. But what is it to be a world? The answer was hinted at when we referred to the temple. On the path we must follow here, the nature of world can only be indicated. What is more, this indication limits itself to warding off anything that might at first distort our view of the world's nature.

The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being. Wherever those decisions of our history that relate to our very being are made, are taken up and abandoned by us, go unrecognized and are rediscovered by new inquiry, there the world worlds. A stone is worldless. Plant and animal

likewise have no world; but they belong to the covert throng of a surrounding into which they are linked. The peasant woman, on the other hand, has a world because she dwells in the overt-ness of beings, of the things that are. Her equipment, in its reliability, gives to this world a necessity and nearness of its own. By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. In a world's worlding is gathered that spaciousness out of which the protective grace of the gods is granted or withheld. Even this doom of the god remaining absent is a way in which world worlds.

A work, by being a work, makes space for that spaciousness. "To make space for" means here especially to liberate the Open and to establish it in its structure. This in-stalling occurs through the erecting mentioned earlier. The work as work sets up a world. The work holds open the Open of the world. But the setting up of a world is only the first essential feature in the work-being of a work to be referred to here. Starting again from the foreground of the work, we shall attempt to make clear in the same way the second essential feature that belongs with the first.

When a work is created, brought forth out of this or that work-material – stone, wood, metal, color, language, tone – we say also that it is made, set forth out of it. But just as the work requires a setting up in the sense of a consecrating-praising erection, because the work's work-being consists in the setting up of a world, so a setting forth is needed because the work-being of the work itself has the character of setting forth. The work as work, in its presencing, is a setting forth, a making. But what does the work set forth? We come to know about this only when we explore what comes to the fore and is customarily spoken of as the making or production of works.

To work-being there belongs the setting up of a world. Thinking of it within this perspective, what is the nature of that in the work which is usually called the work material? Because it is determined by usefulness and serviceability, equipment takes into its service that of which it consists: the matter. In fabricating equipment – e.g., an ax – stone is used, and used up. It disappears into usefulness. The material is all the better and more suitable the less it resists perishing in the equipment being of the equipment. By con-

trast the temple-work, in setting up a world, does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time and to come into the Open of the work's world. The rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to glow, tones to sing, the word to speak. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone, into the firmness and pliancy of wood, into the hardness and luster of metal, into the lighting and darkening of color, into the clang of tone, and into the naming power of the word.

That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of itself we called the earth. Earth is that which comes forth and shelters. Earth, self-dependent, is effortless and untiring. Upon the earth and in it, historical man grounds his dwelling in the world. In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth. This setting forth must be thought here in the strict sense of the word. The work moves the earth itself into the Open of a world and keeps it there. *The work lets the earth be an earth.* [. . .]

The setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work. They belong together, however, in the unity of work-being. This is the unity we seek when we ponder the self-subsistence of the work and try to express in words this closed, unitary repose of self-support. [. . .]

The world is the self-disclosing openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of an historical people. The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing. World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world. But the relation between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives to surmount it. As self-opening it cannot endure anything closed. The earth, however, as sheltering and concealing, tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there.

The opposition of world and earth is a striving. But we would surely all too easily falsify its nature if we were to confound striving with

discord and dispute, and thus see it only as disorder and destruction. In essential striving, rather, the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their natures. Self-assertion of nature, however, is never a rigid insistence upon some contingent state, but surrender to the concealed originality of the source of one's own being. In the struggle, each opponent carries the other beyond itself. Thus the striving becomes ever more intense as striving, and more authentically what it is. The more the struggle overdoes itself on its own part, the more inflexibly do the opponents let themselves go into the intimacy of simple belonging to one another. The earth cannot dispense with the Open of the world if it itself is to appear as earth in the liberated surge of its self-seclusion. The world, again, cannot soar out of the earth's sight if, as the governing breadth and path of all essential destiny, it is to ground itself on a resolute foundation.

In setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is an instigating of this striving. This does not happen so that the work should at the same time settle and put an end to the conflict in an insipid agreement, but so that the strife may remain a strife. Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work accomplishes this striving. The work-being of the work consists in the fighting of the battle between world and earth. It is because the struggle arrives at its high point in the simplicity of intimacy that the unity of the work comes about in the fighting of the battle. The fighting of the battle is the continually self-over-reaching gathering of the work's agitation. The repose of the work that rests in itself thus has its presencing in the intimacy of striving.

From this repose of the work we can now first see what is at work in the work. Until now it was a merely provisional assertion that in an art work the truth is set to work. In what way does truth happen in the work-being of the work, i.e., now, how does truth happen in the fighting of the battle between world and earth? What is truth?

How slight and stunted our knowledge of the nature of truth is, is shown by the laxity we permit ourselves in using this basic word. By truth is usually meant this or that particular truth. That means: something true. A cognition articulated in a proposition can be of this sort. However, we call not only a proposition true, but also a thing, true gold in contrast with sham gold. True here

means genuine, real gold. What does the expression "real" mean here? To us it is what is in truth. The true is what corresponds to the real, and the real is what is in truth. The circle has closed again.

What does "in truth" mean? [. . .]

Truth means the nature of the true. We think this nature in recollecting the Greek word *aletheia*, the unconcealedness of beings. [. . .]

If here and elsewhere we conceive of truth as unconcealedness, we are not merely taking refuge in a more literal translation of a Greek word. We are reminding ourselves of what, unexperienced and unthought, underlies our familiar and therefore outworn nature of truth in the sense of correctness. [. . .]

But it is not we who presuppose the unconcealedness of beings; rather, the unconcealedness of beings (Being) puts us into such a condition of being that in our representation we always remain installed within and in attendance upon unconcealedness. Not only must that in *conformity* with which a cognition orders itself be already in some way unconcealed. The entire *realm* in which this "conforming to something" goes on must already occur as a whole in the unconcealed; and this holds equally of that *for* which the conformity of a proposition to fact becomes manifest. With all our correct representations we would get nowhere, we could not even presuppose that there already is manifest something to which we can conform ourselves, unless the unconcealedness of beings had already exposed us to, placed us in that lighted realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws. [. . .]

This Open happens in the midst of beings. It exhibits an essential feature which we have already mentioned. To the Open there belong a world and the earth. But the world is not simply the Open that corresponds to clearing, and the earth is not simply the Closed that corresponds to concealment. Rather, the world is the clearing of the paths of the essential guiding directions with which all decision complies. Every decision, however, bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision. The earth is not simply the Closed but rather that which rises up as self-closing. World and earth are always intrinsically and essentially in conflict, belligerent by nature.

Only as such do they enter into the conflict of clearing and concealing.

Earth juts through the world and world grounds itself on the earth only so far as truth happens as the primal conflict between clearing and concealing. But how does truth happen? We answer: it happens in a few essential ways. One of these ways in which truth happens is the work-being of the work. Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is the fighting of the battle in which the unconcealedness of beings as a whole, or truth, is won.

Truth happens in the temple's standing where it is. This does not mean that something is correctly represented and rendered here, but that what is as a whole is brought into unconcealedness and held therein. To hold (*halten*) originally means to tend, keep, take care (*hüten*). Truth happens in Van Gogh's painting. This does not mean that something is correctly portrayed, but rather that in the revelation of the equipmental being of the shoes, that which is as a whole – world and earth in their counterplay – attains to unconcealedness.

Thus in the work it is truth, not only something true, that is at work. The picture that shows the peasant shoes, the poem that says the Roman fountain, do not just make manifest what this isolated being as such is – if indeed they manifest anything at all; rather, they make unconcealedness as such happen in regard to what is as a whole. The more simply and authentically the shoes are engrossed in their nature, the more plainly and purely the fountain is engrossed in its nature – the more directly and engagingly do all beings attain to a greater degree of being along with them. That is how self-concealing being is illuminated. Light of this kind joins its shining to and into the work. This shining, joined in the work, is the beautiful. *Beauty is one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness.*

We now, indeed, grasp the nature of truth more clearly in certain respects. What is at work in the work may accordingly have become more clear. [...]

Truth and Art

Art is the origin of the art work and of the artist. Origin is the source of the nature in which the

being of an entity is present. What is art? We seek its nature in the actual work. The actual reality of the work has been defined by that which is at work in the work, by the happening of truth. This happening we think of as the fighting of the conflict between world and earth. Repose occurs in the concentrated agitation of this conflict. The independence or self-composure of the work is grounded here. [...]

The work's createdness, however, can obviously be grasped only in terms of the process of creation. Thus, constrained by the facts, we must consent after all to go into the activity of the artist in order to arrive at the origin of the work of art. The attempt to define the work-being of the work purely in terms of the work itself proves to be unfeasible.

In turning away now from the work to examine the nature of the creative process, we should like nevertheless to keep in mind what was said first of the picture of the peasant shoes and later of the Greek temple.

We think of creation as a bringing forth. But the making of equipment, too, is a bringing forth. Handicraft – a remarkable play of language – does not, to be sure, create works, not even when we contrast, as we must, the handmade with the factory product. But what is it that distinguishes bringing forth as creation from bringing forth in the mode of making? It is as difficult to track down the essential features of the creation of works and the making of equipment as it is easy to distinguish verbally between the two modes of bringing forth. Going along with first appearances we find the same procedure in the activity of potter and sculptor, of joiner and painter. The creation of a work requires craftsmanship. Great artists prize craftsmanship most highly. They are the first to call for its painstaking cultivation, based on complete mastery. They above all others constantly strive to educate themselves ever anew in thorough craftsmanship. [...]

The readiness of equipment and the createdness of the work agree in this, that in each case something is produced. But in contrast to all other modes of production, the work is distinguished by being created so that its createdness is part of the created work. But does not this hold true for everything brought forth, indeed for anything that has in any way come to be? Everything

brought forth surely has this endowment of having been brought forth, if it has any endowment at all. Certainly. But in the work, createdness is expressly created into the created being, so that it stands out from it, from the being thus brought forth, in an expressly particular way. If this is how matters stand, then we must also be able to discover and experience the createdness explicitly in the work.

The emergence of createdness from the work does not mean that the work is to give the impression of having been made by a great artist. The point is not that the created being be certified as the performance of a capable person, so that the producer is thereby brought to public notice. It is not the "N. N. fecit" that is to be made known. Rather, the simple "factum est" is to be held forth into the Open by the work: namely this, that unconcealedness of what is has happened here, and that as this happening it happens here for the first time; or, that such a work *is* at all rather than is not. The thrust that the work as this work is, and the uninterruptedness of this plain thrust, constitute the steadfastness of the work's self-subsistence. Precisely where the artist and the process and the circumstances of the genesis of the work remain unknown, this thrust, this "*that it is*" of createdness, emerges into view most purely from the work.

To be sure, "that" it is made is a property also of all equipment that is available and in use. But this "that" does not become prominent in the equipment; it disappears in usefulness. The more handy a piece of equipment is, the more inconspicuous it remains that, for example, such a hammer is and the more exclusively does the equipment keep itself in its equipmentality. In general, of everything present to us, we can note that it *is*; but this also, if it is noted at all, is noted only soon to fall into oblivion, as is the wont of everything commonplace. And what is more commonplace than this, that a being is? In a work, by contrast, this fact, that it *is* as a work, is just what is unusual. The event of its being created does not simply reverberate through the work; rather, the work casts before itself the eventful fact that the work is as this work, and it has constantly this fact about itself. The more essentially the work opens itself, the more luminous becomes the uniqueness of the fact that it is rather than is not. The more essentially this thrust comes into

the Open, the stronger and more solitary the work becomes. In the bringing forth of the work there lies this offering "that it be." [. . .]

The more solitarily the work, fixed in the figure, stands on its own and the more cleanly it seems to cut all ties to human beings, the more simply does the thrust come into the Open that such a work *is*, and the more essentially is the extraordinary thrust to the surface and the long-familiar thrust down. But this multiple thrusting is nothing violent, for the more purely the work is itself transported into the openness of beings – an openness opened by itself – the more simply does it transport us into this openness and thus at the same time transport us out of the realm of the ordinary. To submit to this displacement means: to transform our accustomed ties to world and to earth and henceforth to restrain all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work. Only the restraint of this staying lets what is created be the work that it is. This letting the work be a work we call the preserving of the work. It is only for such preserving that the work yields itself in its createdness as actual, i.e., now: present in the manner of a work.

Just as a work cannot be without being created but is essentially in need of creators, so what is created cannot itself come into being without those who preserve it. [. . .]

To determine the thing's thingness neither consideration of the bearer of properties is adequate, nor that of the manifold of sense data in their unity, and least of all that of the matter – form structure regarded by itself, which is derived from equipment. Anticipating a meaningful and weighty interpretation of the thingly character of things, we must aim at the thing's belonging to the earth. The nature of the earth, in its free and unhurried bearing and self-closure, reveals itself, however, only in the earth's jutting into a world, in the opposition of the two. This conflict is fixed in place in the figure of the work and becomes manifest by it. What holds true of equipment – namely that we come to know its equipmental character specifically only through the work itself – also holds of the thingly character of the thing. The fact that we never know thingness directly, and if we know it at all, then only vaguely and thus require the work – this fact proves indirectly

that in the work's work-being the happening of truth, the opening up or disclosure of what is, is at work. [. . .]

In the work, the happening of truth is at work and, indeed, at work according to the manner of a work. Accordingly the nature of art was defined to begin with as the setting-into-work of truth. Yet this definition is intentionally ambiguous. It says on the one hand: art is the fixing in place of a self-establishing truth in the figure. This happens in creation as the bringing forth of the unconcealedness of what is. Setting-into-work, however, also means: the bringing of work-being into movement and happening. This happens as preservation. Thus art is: the creative preserving of truth in the work. *Art then is the becoming and happening of truth.* Does truth, then, arise out of nothing? It does indeed if by nothing is meant the mere not of that which is, and if we here think of that which is as an object present in the ordinary way, which thereafter comes to light and is challenged by the existence of the work as only presumptively a true being. Truth is never gathered from objects that are present and ordinary. Rather, the opening up of the Open, and the clearing of what is, happens only as the openness is projected, sketched out, that makes its advent in thrownness. [. . .]

Art is the setting-into-work of truth. In this proposition an essential ambiguity is hidden, in which truth is at once the subject and the object of the setting. But subject and object are unsuitable names here. They keep us from thinking precisely this ambiguous nature, a task that no longer belongs to this consideration. Art is historical, and as historical it is the creative preserving of truth in the work. Art happens as poetry. Poetry is founding in the triple sense of bestowing, grounding, and beginning. Art, as founding, is essentially historical. This means not only that art has a history in the external sense that in the course of time it, too, appears along with many other things, and in the process changes and passes away and offers changing aspects for historiology. Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history.

Art lets truth originate. Art, founding preserving, is the spring that leaps to the truth of what is, in the work. To originate something by a leap, to bring something into being from out of the source of its nature in a founding leap – this is what the word origin (German *Ursprung*, literally, primal leap) means.

The origin of the work of art – that is, the origin of both the creators and the preservers, which is to say of a people's historical existence, is art. This is so because art is by nature an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical.

We inquire into the nature of art. Why do we inquire in this way? We inquire in this way in order to be able to ask more truly whether art is or is not an origin in our historical existence, whether and under what conditions it can and must be an origin.

Such reflection cannot force art and its coming-to-be. But this reflective knowledge is the preliminary and therefore indispensable preparation for the becoming of art. Only such knowledge prepares its space for art, their way for the creators, their location for the preservers.

In such knowledge, which can only grow slowly, the question is decided whether art can be an origin and then must be a head start, or whether it is to remain a mere appendix and then can only be carried along as a routine cultural phenomenon.

Are we in our existence historically at the origin? Do we know, which means do we give heed to, the nature of the origin? Or, in our relation to art, do we still merely make appeal to a cultivated acquaintance with the past?

For this either-or and its decision there is an infallible sign. Hölderlin, the poet – whose work still confronts the Germans as a test to be stood – named it in saying:

Schwer verlässt
was nahe dem Ursprung wohnet, den Ort.

Reluctantly
that which dwells near its origin departs.
– “The Journey,” verses 18–19

Aesthetic Theory

Theodor Adorno

Theodor Adorno (1903–69) was a German social theorist who viewed capitalism as usurping freedom and art as a domain in which freedom can be attained.

Art, Society, Aesthetics

1 *Loss of certainty*

Today it goes without saying that nothing concerning art goes without saying, much less without thinking. Everything about art has become problematic: its inner life, its relation to society, even its right to exist. One would have thought that the loss of an intuitive and naive approach to art would be offset by a tendency to increased reflection which seizes upon the chance to fill the void of infinite possibilities. This has not happened. What looked at first like an expansion of art turned out to be its contraction. The great expanse of the unforeseen which revolutionary artistic movements began to explore around 1910 did not live up to the promise of happiness and adventure it had held out. What has happened instead is that the process begun at that time came to corrode the very same categories

which were its own reason for being. An ever-increasing number of things artistic were drawn into an eddy of new taboos, and rather than enjoy their newly won freedom, artists everywhere were quick to look for some presumed foundation for what they were doing. This flight into a new order, however flimsy, is a reflection of the fact that absolute freedom in art – which is a particular – contradicts the abiding unfreedom of the social whole. That is why the place and function of art in society have become uncertain. To put it another way, the autonomy art gained after having freed itself from its earlier cult function and its derivatives depended on the idea of humanity. As society grew less humane, art became less autonomous. Those constituent elements of art that were suffused with the ideal of humanity have lost their force.

All the same, autonomy is an irrevocable aspect of art. There is no point in trying to allay the self-doubts of art – doubts, incidentally, which find expression in art itself – by restoring to her a social role. Such attempts are in vain. Today, however, autonomous art shows signs of being blind. A trait of art from time immemorial, blindness in the age of emancipation has become the dominant characteristic despite, and because of, the fact that, as Hegel realized, art can no longer afford to be naive art. Nowadays artistic

sophistication amalgamates itself with a *naïveté* of a different and stronger kind, which is the uncertainty about the purpose of art and the conditions for its continued existence. Did art not lose its foundation when it gained complete freedom from external purposes? Questions like this touch on the intrinsically historical nature of aesthetics.

Works of art, it is said, leave the real empirical world behind, producing a counter-realm of their own, a realm which is an existent like the empirical world. This claim is false; it implies an *a priori* affirmation of that which is, no matter how 'tragic' the content of the work of art may be. Those clichés about art casting a glow of happiness and harmony over an unhappy and divided real world are loathsome because they make a mockery of any emphatic concept of art by looking only at perverse bourgeois practices such as the employment of art as a dispenser of solace. These clichés also point to the wound of art itself. Having dissociated itself from religion and its redemptive truths, art was able to flourish. Once secularized, however, art was condemned, for lack of any hope for a real alternative, to offer to the existing world a kind of solace that reinforced the fetters autonomous art had wanted to shake off. There is a sense in which the principle of autonomy is itself solace of this kind, for in claiming to be able to posit a well-rounded totality entirely on its own, the principle of artistic autonomy willy-nilly creates the false impression that the world outside is such a rounded whole, too. By rejecting reality – and this is not a form of escapism but an inherent quality of art – art vindicated reality.

Helmut Kuhn's thesis¹ that every work of art is a paean would be true if it were critical in spirit, which it is not. Given the abnormities of real life today, the affirmative essence of art, while an integral part of art, has become insufferable. True art challenges its own essence, thereby heightening the sense of uncertainty that dwells in the artist.

It would be wrong, too, to try to dispose of art through abstract negation. Art undergoes qualitative change when it attacks its traditional foundations. Thus art becomes a qualitatively different entity by virtue of its opposition, at the level of artistic form, to the existing world and also by virtue of its readiness to aid and shape that world.

Neither the concept of solace nor its opposite, refusal, captures the meaning of art.

2 *Origins – a false question*

The concept of art balks at being defined, for it is a historically changing constellation of moments. Nor can the nature of art be ascertained by going back to the origin of art in order to find some fundamental and primary layer that supports everything else. The late romantics believed in the supremacy and purity of archaic art. This view is no more persuasive than the opposite argument, put forth by classicists, that the earliest works of art are impure and muddy, inasmuch as they were inseparable from magic, from historical records and from practical aims, like wanting to communicate over long distances by means of calling and blowing sounds. There is no way of deciding the issue because historical facts are hard to come by.

Similarly, any attempt to subsume the historical genesis of art ontologically under some supreme principle would necessarily get lost in a mass of detail. The only theoretically relevant insight that might be obtained is the negative one that, for the plurality of what are called 'the arts', there does not even seem to exist a universal concept of art able to accommodate them all.² Studies devoted to prehistoric art tend to present raw empirical material side by side with wild speculation. Johann Jakob Bachofen is the best-known example here.

Philosophers are used to distinguishing conceptually between two types of problems of origin, one belonging to metaphysics, the other to primal history. Upholding this distinction too rigidly leads however to a distortion of the literal meaning of the concept of origin.³ The definition of art does indeed depend on what art once was, but it must also take into account what has become of art and what might possibly become of it in the future. Art, we said, is different from empirical reality. Now this difference itself does not stay the same; it changes because art changes. History, for example, has transformed certain cult objects into art long after they were first produced. Or, to give another example, at a certain moment in time particular art objects have ceased to be viewed as art. In this connection, the abstractly posed question of whether a phenomenon like

the film is art or something else is instructive, although it leads nowhere. As we saw, art has a changing scope and it may be just as well not to try to define sharply what's inside and what's outside of it.

What are called questions of aesthetic constitution are demarcated by the tension between the motive force of art and art as past history. It is through its dynamic laws, not through some invariable principle, that art can be understood. It is defined by its relation to what is different from art. This other makes it possible for us to arrive at a substantive understanding of the specifically artistic in art. It is this approach to art that alone meets the criteria of a materialist and dialectical aesthetic, which evolves by segregating itself from its own matrix. Its law of motion and its law of form are one and the same.

Central to contemporary aesthetics is the assumption that even a product of historical becoming may be true. It was Nietzsche who developed this notion in reference to traditional philosophy. Rephrasing and putting a point to Nietzsche's insight, I think truth exists only as a product of historical becoming. As far as art is concerned, this is true throughout: works of art became what they are by negating their origin. It was only fairly recently, namely after art had become thoroughly secular and subject to a process of technological evolution and after secularization had firmly taken hold, that art acquired another important feature: an inner logic of development. Art should not be blamed for its one-time ignominious relation to magical abracadabra, human servitude and entertainment, for it has after all annihilated these dependencies along with the memory of its fall from grace. Moreover, it is an over-simplification to think that dinner music, for example, could never achieve the heights of autonomous music just because it was dinner music. Conversely, it is also fallacious to argue that dinner music, because it represented a service to mankind, has the edge on autonomous music with its haughty refusal to be serviceable to anything or to anybody. Let us remember, too, that the greatest part of what passes for musical art today is an echo of the contemptuous clatter of dinner music. Unfortunately, this fact does nothing to make the quality of early eighteenth-century dinner music any better.

3 *Truth, life and death of art*

The Hegelian notion of a possible withering away of art is consistent with the historical essence of art as a product of becoming. This seemingly paradoxical fact, that Hegel conceived of art as something mortal while at the same time treating it as a moment of absolute spirit, is fully in line with the dual character of his system. His view however implies a conclusion he would never have drawn himself, namely that the content of art – its absolute aspect, according to Hegel – is not identical with the dimension of life and death. It is conceivable that that content might precisely be art's mortality. Music is a case in point. A latecomer among the arts, great music may well turn out to be an art form that was possible only during a limited period of human history. The revolt of art which programmatically defined itself in terms of a new stance towards the objective, historical world has become a revolt against art. Whether art will survive these developments is anybody's guess. Nobody however should ignore the fact that for once reactionary cultural pessimism and a critical theory of culture see eye to eye on the following proposition: art may, as Hegel speculated it would, soon enter the age of its demise. A century ago Rimbaud's dictum intuitively anticipated the history of modern art; later his silence and his being co-opted on becoming an employee anticipated the decline of art.

Aesthetics today is powerless to avert its becoming a necrologue of art. What it can and must avoid is making graveside speeches, soothing the end of everything, savouring past achievements and jumping on the bandwagon of barbarism – which barbarism is no better and no worse than the culture that rallies to its side, with the two fully deserving each other. Assuming art is abolished, abolishes itself; vanishes or barely hangs on to a precarious existence – all this does not mean that the content of past art will necessarily go down the drain, too. Art could well be survived by its past content in a new and different society, rid of its barbarous culture.

What [have] already died are not only aesthetic forms but also many substantive motifs. To mention only one example, the literature about adultery, which had its efflorescence during the Victorian period and into the early twentieth century, is difficult to appreciate today, what with

the dissolution of the bourgeois nuclear family and the loosening up of monogamy. A popular version of that kind of literature today has found a new but miserable home: illustrated magazines. The authentic element in *Madame Bovary*, at one time an integral part of the subject matter of the novel, has long since outlived both that content and its demise – a statement that is not at all meant to lure anybody into the optimistic belief in the invincibility of the spirit. There are of course many instances where the death of the content of a work of art has in fact entailed the perdition of the higher authentic moment as well. What makes art and its products mortal – and this includes heteronomous and autonomous art, with the latter vindicating the social division of labour and the special position held therein by the intellect – what makes art mortal is the fact that it is not only art but something other than, and opposed to, art. Admixed to the concept of art is the germ that will dialectically supersede art.

4 *On the relation between art and society*

Aesthetic refraction is as incomplete without the refracted object as imagination is without the imagined object. This has special significance for the problem of the inherent functionality of art. Tied to the real world, art adopts the principle of self-preservation of that world, turning it into the ideal of self-identical art, the essence of which Schönberg once summed up in the statement that the painter paints a picture rather than what it represents. Implied here is the idea that every work of art spontaneously aims at being identical with itself, just as in the world outside a fake identity is everywhere forcibly imposed on objects by the insatiable subject. Aesthetic identity is different, however, in one important respect: it is meant to assist the non-identical in its struggle against the repressive identification compulsion that rules the outside world. It is by virtue of its separation from empirical reality that the work of art can become a being of a higher order, fashioning the relation between the whole and its parts in accordance with its own needs. Works of art are after images or replicas of empirical life, inasmuch as they proffer to the latter what in the outside world is being denied them. In the process they slough off a repressive, external-empirical

mode of experiencing the world. Whereas the line separating art from real life should not be fudged, least of all by glorifying the artist, it must be kept in mind that works of art are alive, have a life *sui generis*. Their life is more than just an outward fate. Over time, great works reveal new faces of themselves, they age, they become rigid, and they die. Being human artefacts, they do not 'live' in the same sense as human beings. Of course not. To put the accent on the artefactual aspect in works of art seems to imply that the way in which they came to be is important. It is not. The emphasis must be on their inner constitution. They have life because they speak in ways nature and man cannot. They talk because there is communication between their individual constituents, which cannot be said of things that exist in a state of mere diffusion.

As artefacts, works of art communicate not only internally but also with the external reality which they try to get away from and which none the less is the substratum of their content. Art negates the conceptualization foisted on the real world and yet harbours in its own substance elements of the empirically existent. Assuming that one has to differentiate form and content before grasping their mediation, we can say that art's opposition to the real world is in the realm of form; but this occurs, generally speaking, in a mediated way such that aesthetic form is a sedimentation of content. What seem like pure forms in art, namely those of traditional music, do in all respects, and all the way down to details of musical idiom, derive from external content such as dance. Similarly, ornaments in the visual arts originally tended to be cult symbols. Members of the Warburg Institute were following this lead, studying the derivability of aesthetic forms from contents in the context of classical antiquity and its influence on later periods. This kind of work needs to be undertaken on a larger scale.

The manner in which art communicates with the outside world is in fact also a lack of communication, because art seeks, blissfully or unhappily, to seclude itself from the world. This non-communication points to the fractured nature of art. It is natural to think that art's autonomous domain has no mere in common with the outside world than a few borrowed elements undergoing radical change in the context of art. But there is more to it than that. There is

some truth to the historical cliché which states that the developments of artistic methods, usually lumped together under the term 'style', correspond to social development. Even the most sublime work of art takes up a definite position *vis-à-vis* reality by stepping out-side of reality's spell, not abstractly once and for all, but occasionally and in concrete ways, when it unconsciously and tacitly polemicizes against the condition of society at a particular point in time.

How can works of art be like windowless monads, representing something which is other than they? There is only one way to explain this, which is to view them as being subject to a dynamic or immanent historicity and a dialectical tension between nature and domination of nature, a dialectic that seems to be of the same kind as the dialectic of society. Or to put it more cautiously, the dialectic of art resembles the social dialectic without consciously imitating it. The productive force of useful labour and that of art are the same. They both have the same teleology. And what might be termed aesthetic relations of production – defined as everything that provides an outlet for the productive forces of art or everything in which these forces become embedded – are sedimentations of social relations of production bearing the imprint of the latter. Thus in all dimensions of its productive process art has a twofold essence, being both an autonomous entity and a social fact in the Durkheimian sense of the term.

It is through this relationship to the empirical that works of art salvage, albeit in neutralized fashion, something that once upon a time was literally a shared experience of all mankind and which enlightenment has since expelled. Art, too, partakes of enlightenment, but in a different way: works of art do not lie; what they say is literally true. Their reality however lies in the fact that they are answers to questions brought before them from outside. The tension in art therefore has meaning only in relation to the tension outside. The fundamental layers of artistic experience are akin to the objective world from which art recoils.

The unresolved antagonisms of reality reappear in art in the guise of immanent problems of artistic form. This, and not the deliberate injection of objective moments or social content,

defines art's relation to society. The aesthetic tensions manifesting themselves in works of art express the essence of reality in and through their emancipation from the factual façade of exteriority. Art's simultaneous dissociation from and secret connection with empirical being confirms the strength of Hegel's analysis of the nature of a conceptual barrier (*Schranke*): the intellect, argues Hegel against Kant, no sooner posits a barrier than it has to go beyond it, absorbing into itself that against which the barrier was set up.⁴ We have here, among other things, a basis for a non-moralistic critique of the idea of *l'art pour l'art* with its abstract negation of the empirical and with its monomaniac separatism in aesthetic theory.

Freedom, the presupposition of art and the self-glorifying conception art has of itself, is the cunning of art's reason. Blissfully soaring above the real world, art is still chained by each of its elements to the empirical other, into which it may even sink back altogether at every instant. In their relation to empirical reality works of art recall the theologumenon that in a state of redemption everything will be just as it is and yet wholly different. There is an unmistakable similarity in all this with the development of the profane. The profane secularizes the sacred realm to the point where the latter is the only secular thing left. The sacred realm is thus objectified, staked out as it were, because its moment of untruth awaits secularization as much as it tries to avert it through incantation.

It follows that art is not defined once and for all by the scope of an immutable concept. Rather, the concept of art is a fragile balance attained now and then, quite similar to the psychological equilibrium between id and ego. Disturbances continually upset the balance, keeping the process in motion. Every work of art is an instant; every great work of art is a stoppage of the process, a momentary standing still, whereas a persistent eye sees only the process. While it is true that works of art provide answers to their own questions, it is equally true that in so doing they become questions for themselves. Take a look at the widespread inclination (which to this day has not been mitigated by education) to perceive art in terms of extra-aesthetic or pre-aesthetic criteria. This tendency is, on the one hand, a mark of atrocious backwardness or of the regressive

consciousness of many people. On the other hand, there is no denying that that tendency is promoted by something in art itself. If art is perceived strictly in aesthetic terms, then it cannot be properly perceived in aesthetic terms. The artist must feel the presence of the empirical other in the foreground of his own experience in order to be able to sublimate that experience, thus freeing himself from his confinement to content while at the same time saving the being-for-itself of art from slipping into outright indifference toward the world.

Art is and is not being-for-itself. Without a heterogeneous moment, art cannot achieve autonomy. Great epics that survive their own oblivion were originally shot through with historical and geographical reporting. Valéry, for one, was aware of the degree to which the Homeric, pagan-germanic and Christian epics contained raw materials that had never been melted down and recast by the laws of form, noting that this did not diminish their rank in comparison with 'pure' works of art. Similarly, tragedy, the likely origin of the abstract idea of aesthetic autonomy, was also an after-image of pragmatically oriented cult acts. At no point in its history of progressive emancipation was art able to stamp out that moment. And the reason is not that the bonds were simply too strong. Long before socialist realism rationally planned its debasement, the realistic novel, which was at its height as a literary form in the nineteenth century, bears the marks of reportage, anticipating what was later to become the task of social science surveys. Conversely, the fanatic thoroughness of linguistic integration that characterizes *Madame Bovary*, for instance, is probably the result of the contrary moment. The continued relevance of this work is due to the unity of both.

In art, the criterion of success is twofold: first, works of art must be able to integrate materials and details into their immanent law of form; and, second, they must not try to erase the fractures left by the process of integration, preserving instead in the aesthetic whole the traces of those elements which resisted integration. Integration as such does not guarantee quality. There is no privileged single category, not even the aesthetically central one of form, that defines the essence of art and suffices to judge its product. In short,

art has defining characteristics that go against the grain of what philosophy of art ordinarily conceives as art. Hegel is the exception. His aesthetics of content recognized the moment of otherness inherent in art, thus superseding the old aesthetic of form. The latter seems to be operating with too pure a concept of art, even though it has at least one advantage, which is that it does not, unlike Hegel's (and Kierkegaard's) substantive aesthetics, place obstacles in the way of certain historical developments such as abstract painting. This is one weakness of Hegel's aesthetic. The other is that, by conceiving form in terms of content, Hegel's theory of art regresses to a position that can only be called 'pre-aesthetic' and crude. Hegel mistakes the replicatory (*abbildende*) or discursive treatment of content for the kind of otherness that is constitutive of art. He sins, as it were, against his own dialectical concept of aesthetics, with results that he could not foresee. He in effect helped prepare the way for the banausic tendency to transform art into an ideology of repression.

The moment of unreality and non-existence in art is not independent of the existent, as though it were posited or invented by some arbitrary will. Rather, that moment of unreality is a structure resulting from quantitative relations between elements of being, relations which are in turn a response to, and an echo of, the imperfections of real conditions, their constraints, their contradictions, and their potentialities. Art is related to its other like a magnet to a field of iron filings. The elements of art as well as their constellation, or what is commonly thought to be the spiritual essence of art, point back to the real other. The identity of the works of art with existent reality also accounts for the centripetal force that enables them to gather unto themselves the traces and *membra disiecta*⁵ of real life. Their affinity with the world lies in a principle that is conceived to be a contrast to that world but is in fact no different from the principle whereby spirit has dominated the world. Synthesis is not some process of imposing order on the elements of a work of art. It is important, rather, that the elements interact with each other; hence there is a sense in which synthesis is a mere repetition of the pre-established interdependence among elements, which interdependence is a product of otherness, of non-art. Synthesis, therefore, is firmly grounded in the material aspects of works of art.

There is a link between the aesthetic moment of form and non-violence. In its difference from the existent, art of necessity constitutes itself in terms of that which is not a work of art yet is indispensable for its being. The emphasis on non-intentionality in art, noticeable first in the sympathy for popular art in Apollinaire, early Cubism and Wedekind (who derided what he called 'art-artists'), indicates that art became aware, however dimly, that it interacted with its opposite. This new self-conception of art gave rise to a critical turn signalling an end to the illusory equation of art with pure spirituality.

5 Critique of the psychoanalytic theory of art

Art is the social antithesis of society. The constitution of the domain of art resembles the constitution of an inner space of ideas in the individual. Both areas intersect in the concept of sublimation. Hence it is natural and promising to attempt to conceptualize art in terms of some theory of psychic life.

A comparison between an anthropological theory of human constants and a psychoanalytic one would seem to favour the latter. But caution is in order: psychoanalysis is better suited to explain purely psychic phenomena than aesthetic ones. According to psychoanalytic theory, works of art are essentially projections of the unconscious. Psychoanalysis thus puts the emphasis on the individual producer of art and the interpretation of aesthetic content as psychic content, to the detriment of the categories of form. What psychoanalysis does when it turns to the analysis of art is to transfer the banausic sensitivity of the therapist to such unlikely objects as Leonardo and Baudelaire. It is important to debunk such studies, which are frequently offshoots of the biographical genre, in no uncertain terms; for despite their stress on sex they are hopelessly philistine in conception, dismissing as neurotics men of art who in fact merely objectified in their work the negativity of life. The book by Laforgue, for instance, seriously accuses Baudelaire of having suffered from a mother complex.⁶ The author does not even touch on the problem of whether Baudelaire could have written the *Fleurs du mal* had he been healthy, let alone whether, because of the neurosis, the poems turned out worse than they might otherwise have been.

Psychic normalcy is raised to a criterion of judgment even in the case of someone like Baudelaire, whose greatness was so unequivocally tied up with the absence of a *mens sana*. The tenor of psychoanalytic monographs on artists conveys the sense of an implicit ought: that art should deal affirmatively with the negativity of experience. To the psychoanalytic authors, the negative moment is just a mark of the process of repression finding its way into the work of art.

From the point of view of psychoanalysis, art is day-dreaming. It is a view that, on the one hand, mistakes works of art for documents, lodged in the dreaming person's head. On the other hand, as a kind of trade-off for having first excised the extra-mental sphere, it reduces art to content, in strange opposition incidentally to Freud, who after all had already emphasized the importance of dream *work*. With their assumption of an analogy between dreaming and artistic creation, psychoanalysts, like all positivists, vastly overrate the moment of fiction in art. The projection that occurs in the creative process is not at all the decisive moment in works of art; equally important are idiom, material and, above all, the product itself, the latter being virtually ignored by psychoanalysts. For example, the psychoanalytic thesis that music is a defence mechanism against impending paranoia, while it may well be clinically correct, is useless for an appreciation of the quality and substance of a single musical composition.

Compared with the idealist theory of art, the psychoanalytic one has the advantage of bringing to light those elements in art that are not art-like. In so doing, psychoanalysis helps to free art from its enthrallment to absolute spirit. Its opposition against vulgar idealism, which gives to art a sanctuary in some allegedly higher sphere and avidly protects it against all insights into its own essence and above all into the connection it has with instinct – this opposition is part of the spirit of enlightenment. To the extent to which psychoanalysis decodes the social character of a work and its author, it is able to furnish concrete, mediating links between the structure of works of art and that of society. On the other hand, psychoanalysis, not unlike idealism, is spreading its own kind of enthrallment by reducing art to an absolutely subjective system of signs denoting drive states of the subject. Given this tendency,

psychoanalysis is able to decipher phenomena but not the phenomenon of art itself. To psychoanalysis works of art are factual. It neglects to consider their real objectivity, their inner consistency, the level of form, their critical impulses, their relation to non-psychic reality and, last but not least, their truth content.

A woman painter, in the spirit of sincerity that governs a pact between analyst and patient, once complained in the doctor's office that she was appalled at the poor quality of the engravings he had hung up to decorate his walls, whereupon he explained to her that she was merely showing her aggression . . . Works of art are much less replicas and properties of the artist than a physician likes to think who knows artists only as persons lying on a couch. Only a dilettante will even try to reduce everything about art to the unconscious, reiterating one hackneyed psychoanalytic cliché after another. In the process of artistic production, unconscious drives are one impetus among many. They become integrated with the work of art through the law of form. The real human being who created the work is no more a part of that work than a real horse is a part of a painted one.

Works of art are not some kind of thematic apperception tests, either. In so far as psychoanalysis implies that they are, it reveals another seamy side of its anti-aestheticism. Part of the blame for this ignorance of what art is all about lies, incidentally, in the pre-eminence psychoanalysis gives to the reality principle. Adaptation to reality has the status of a *summum bonum*, whereas any deviation from the reality principle is immediately branded as an escape. The experience of reality is such that it provides all kinds of legitimate grounds for wanting to escape. This exposes the harmonistic ideology behind the psychoanalytic indignation about people's escape mechanisms. Even at the level of psychology, the need for art can be given a better justification than it has so far got from psychoanalysis. It is true, there is an element of escape in imagination, but the two are not synonymous.

Art transcends the reality principle in the direction both of something higher and of something even more mundane. There is no reason to point a taunting finger at that. The image of the artist as a neurotic, tolerated by and integrated into the social division of labour, is a distortion.

In artists of the highest calibre like Beethoven and Rembrandt, the keenest awareness of reality was joined to an equally acute sense of alienation from reality. It is phenomena like this which would be truly appropriate subjects for a psychology of art. Its task would be to decode the work of art as something that is identical with the artist and yet different from him, inasmuch as it represents labour spent upon a resistant other. And if art has one psychoanalytically relevant root, it has got to be that of omnipotence fantasy. But again, what shines forth in these fantasies beneath the raw psychological need for power is the desire to bring about a better world. This sets free the entire dialectic of art and society. By contrast, the psychological view of the art work in terms of a purely subjective language of the unconscious does not even come close to a dialectical understanding.

6 Kant and Freud on art

Freud's theory of art as wish-fulfilment has its antithesis in the theory of Kant. Kant states at the start of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' that the first moment of a judgment of taste is disinterested satisfaction,⁷ where interest is defined as 'the satisfaction which we combine with the representation of the existence of an object'.⁸ Right away there is an ambiguity. It is impossible to tell whether Kant means, by representation of the existence of an object, the empirical object dealt with in a work of art, in other words its subject matter or content, or whether he means the work of art itself. Is he referring to the pretty nude model or to the sweetly pleasing sound of a piece of music (which, incidentally, can be pure artistic trash or an integral part of artistic quality)? Kant's stress on representation flows directly from his subjectivist approach, which locates the aesthetic quality in the effect a work of art has upon the viewer. This is in accord with the rationalist tradition, notably Moses Mendelsohn. While staying in the old tradition of an aesthetic that emphasizes effect (*Wirkungsaesthetik*), the *Critique of Judgment* is none the less a radical immanent critique of then contemporary rationalist aesthetics. Let us remember that the significance of Kantian subjectivism as a whole lies in its objective intention, its attempt to salvage objectivity by means of an analysis of subjective moments.

It is through the concept of disinterestedness that Kant breaks up the supremacy of pleasure in aesthetics. Satisfaction is meant to preserve effect but disinterestedness draws away from it. Bereft of what Kant calls interest, satisfaction and pleasure become wholly indeterminate, losing the capacity to define the beautiful. All the same, the doctrine of disinterested satisfaction is impoverished in view of the richness of aesthetic phenomena. It reduces them either to the formally beautiful – a questionable entity when viewed in isolation – or in the case of natural objects to the sublime. The reduction of art to absolute form misses the point about the why and wherefore of art. Kant's murky footnote,⁹ which says that a judgment about an object of satisfaction is disinterested, i.e. not based on interest, even though it may be 'interesting', i.e. capable of evoking an interest, testifies honestly, if indirectly, to the fact that he was aware of a difficulty. Kant separates aesthetic feeling – and therefore, according to his own understanding, virtually the whole of art – from the faculty of desire at which the 'representation of the existence of an object' is aimed. Or, as he puts it, satisfaction in such a representation 'always has reference to the faculty of desire'.¹⁰ Kant was the first to have gained an insight that was never to be forgotten since: namely, that aesthetic conduct is free of immediate desire. Thus he rescued art from the greedy clutches of a kind of insensitivity that forever wants to touch and savour it.

Comparing Kant and Freud, it is interesting to note that the Kantian motif is not entirely foreign to the Freudian theory. Even for Freud, works of art, far from being direct wish-fulfilment, transform repressed libido into socially productive accomplishments. What is, of course, uncritically presupposed in this theory is the social value of art, whose quality as art simply rests on public reputation. By putting the difference between art, on the one hand, and the faculty of desire and empirical reality, on the other, into much sharper relief than Freud, Kant does more than simply idealize art. Isolating the aesthetic from the empirical sphere, he constitutes art. He then, however, proceeds to arrest this process of constitution in the framework of his transcendental philosophy, simplistically equating constitution with the essence of art and ignoring the fact that the subjective instinctual components of art crop up, in different form, even in the most mature manifestations of art.

In his theory of sublimation, on the other hand, Freud was more clearly aware of the dynamic nature of art. The price he paid was no smaller than Kant's. For Freud, the spiritual essence of art remains hidden. For Kant, it does emerge from the distinctions between aesthetic, practical and appetitive behaviour, Kant's preference for sensuous intuition notwithstanding. In the Freudian view works of art, although products of sublimation, are little more than plenipotentiaries of sensuous impulses made unrecognizable to some degree by a kind of dream-work.

A comparison between two thinkers as different as Kant and Freud – Kant, for example, not only rejected philosophical psychologism but with age also became hostile to psychology as such – is justified by the presence of a common denominator that outweighs the differences between the Kantian construction of the transcendental subject and the Freudian focus on the empirical subject. Where they differ is in their positive and negative approaches, respectively, to the faculty of desire. What they have in common, however, is the underlying subjective orientation. For both, the work of art exists only in relation to the individual who contemplates or produces it. There is a mechanism in Kant's thought that forces him, both in moral and in aesthetic philosophy, to consider the ontic, empirical individual to a larger extent than seems warranted by the notion of the transcendental subject. In aesthetics this implies that there can be no pleasure without a living being to whom an object is pleasing. Without explicit recognition, Kant devotes the entire *Critique of Judgment* to an analysis of *constituta*. Therefore, despite the programmatic idea of building a bridge between theoretical and practical pure reason, the faculty of judgment turns out to be *sui generis* in relation to both forms of reason.

Perhaps the most important taboo in art is the one that prohibits an animal-like attitude toward the object, say, a desire to devour it or otherwise to subjugate it to one's body. Now, the strength of such a taboo is matched by the strength of the repressed urge. Hence, all art contains in itself a negative moment from which it tries to get away. If Kant's disinterestedness is to be more than a synonym for indifference, it has to have a trace of untamed interest somewhere. Indeed, there is much to be said for the thesis that the dignity of

works of art depends on the magnitude of the interest from which they were wrested. Kant denies this in order to protect his concept of freedom from spurious heteronomies that he saw lurking everywhere. In this regard, his theory of art is tainted by an insufficiency of his theory of practical reason. In the context of Kant's philosophy, the idea of a beautiful object possessing a kind of independence from the sovereign ego must seem like a digression into intelligible worlds. The source from which art antithetically originates, as well as the content of art, are of no concern to Kant, who instead posits something as formal as aesthetic satisfaction as the defining characteristic of art. His aesthetics presents the paradox of a castrated hedonism, of a theory of pleasure without pleasure. This position fails to do justice either to artistic experience wherein satisfaction is a subordinate moment in a larger whole, or to the material-corporeal interest, i.e. repressed and unsatisfied needs that resonate in their aesthetic negations – the works of art – turning them into something more than empty patterns.

Aesthetic disinterestedness has moved interest beyond particularity. Objectively, the interest in constituting an aesthetic totality entailed an interest in the proper arrangement of the social whole. In the last analysis aesthetic interest aimed not at some particular fulfilment, but at the fulfilment of infinite possibilities, which in turn cannot be thought without fulfilment of the particular.

A corresponding weakness can be noticed in Freud's theory of art, which is a good deal more idealistic than Freud had thought it was. By placing works of art squarely into a realm of psychic immanence, Freud's theory loses sight of their antithetical relation to the non-subjective, which thus remains unmolested, as it were, by the thorns pointed toward it by works of art. As a result, psychic processes like instinctual denial and adaptation are left as the only relevant aspects of art. Psychologistic interpretations of art are in league with the philistine view that art is a conciliatory force capable of smoothing over differences, or that it is the dream of a better life, never mind the fact that such dreams should recall the negativity from which they were forcibly extracted. Psychoanalysis in conformist fashion simply takes over the prevalent view of art as some sort of beneficent cultural heritage. To this corresponds the aesthetic hedonism which has psycho-

analysis banish all negativity from art *qua* result, pushing the analysis of that negativity back to the level of instinctual conflict. Once successful sublimation and integration become the be-all and end-all of a work of art, it loses the power to transcend mere existence. However, as soon as we conceive of the work of art in terms of its ability to keep a hold on the negativity of the real and to enter into a definite relation to it, we have to change the concept of disinterestedness as well. In contrast to the Kantian and Freudian views on the matter, works of art necessarily evolve in a dialectic of interests and disinterestedness.

There is a grain of validity even in a contemplative attitude towards art, inasmuch as it underscores the important posture of art's turning away from immediate praxis and refusing to play the worldly game. This has long been a component of artistic behaviour. We see here, incidentally, that works of art are tied up with specific modes of behaviour; indeed, that they *are* modes of behaviour. Now it is only those works of art that manifest themselves as modes of behaviour which have a reason for being. Art is like a plenipotentiary of a type of praxis that is better than the prevailing praxis of society, dominated as it is by brutal self-interest. This is what art criticizes. It gives the lie to the notion that production for production's sake is necessary, by opting for a mode of praxis beyond labour. Art's *promesse du bonheur*, then, has an even more emphatically critical meaning: it not only expresses the idea that current praxis denies happiness, but also carries the connotation that happiness is something beyond praxis. The chasm between praxis and happiness is surveyed and measured by the power of negativity of the work of art.

Surely a writer like Kafka does anything but appeal to our faculty of desire. Prose writings such as *Metamorphosis* and *Penal Colony*, on the contrary, seem to call forth in us responses like real anxiety, a violent drawing back, an almost physical revulsion. They seem to be the opposite of desire. Yet these phenomena of psychic defence and rejection have more in common with desire than with the old Kantian disinterestedness. Kafka and the literature that followed his example have swept away the notion of disinterestedness. In relation to Kafka's works, disinterestedness is a completely inadequate concept of interpretation. In the last analysis the postulate of disinterestedness debases all art, turning it into a pleasant

or useful plaything, in accord with Horace's *ars poetica*. Idealist aesthetics and its contemporaneous art products have emancipated themselves from this misconception. The precondition for the autonomy of artistic experience is the abandonment of the attitude of tasting and savouring. The trajectory leading to aesthetic autonomy passes through the stage of disinterestedness; and well it should, for it was during this stage that art emancipated itself from cuisine and pornography, an emancipation that has become irrevocable. However, art does not come to rest in disinterestedness. It moves on. And in so doing it reproduces, in different form, the interest inherent in disinterestedness. In a false world all *hedone* is false. This goes for artistic pleasure, too. Art renounces happiness for the sake of happiness, thus enabling desire to survive in art.

7 Enjoyment of art

In Kant, we saw that enjoyment comes in the guise of disinterestedness, a guise that makes enjoyment unrecognizable. What ordinary language and conformist aesthetics have termed enjoyment of art, on analogy with real enjoyment, has probably never existed and will probably never exist. The individual has a limited share in artistic experience as such. This share varies with the quality of a work of art: the better the work, the smaller the subjective component in it. To fetishize the enjoyment of art is to be a crude and insensitive person, who tends to give himself away by describing something as a 'feast for the eye'.

Let us acknowledge a limitation of this critique, though: if the last trace of enjoyment were expunged from art, we would face the embarrassing question of what works of art are for. Still, it remains a fact that people enjoy works of art the less, the more they know about them, and vice versa. If we must discuss attitudes to art works at all, it is probably correct to say that the traditional attitude was one not of enjoyment but of admiration – admiration for what those works are in themselves, regardless of their relation to the viewer. What the viewer noticed in them and what enraptured him was their truth (again, Kafka is a good example of art as truth). They were not some kind of higher type of means of enjoyment. The relation between the viewer and

work had nothing to do with the incorporation of art by the viewer. On the contrary the viewer seemed to vanish in the work of art. This holds *a fortiori* for the products of modern art that come at the viewer sometimes like train engines in a film.

If you ask a musician if he enjoys playing his instrument, he will probably reply: 'I hate it', just like the grimacing cellist in the American joke. People who have a genuine relation to art would rather immerse themselves in art than reduce art to an object. They cannot live without art, but its individual manifestations are not so many sources of pleasure for them. It goes without saying that nobody would concern himself with art if he did not get something out of it. But this does not mean that people should actually draw up balance sheets, entering such items as 'Heard Ninth Symphony tonight, enjoyed myself so and so much'. Unfortunately, such feeble-minded thinking has by now almost become the commonsensical rule. The bourgeois wants his art luxurious, his life ascetic. It would make more sense if it were the other way around.

Having deprived people of real gratification in the sphere of immediate sense experience, reified consciousness is feeding them a substitute in the form of sensuously dressed-up art, assigning to art a place that is beneath its dignity. On the surface, the strategy seems to move the works of art closer to the consumer by stressing their sensuous attraction. At a deeper level, what happens is that he becomes alienated from them, as he begins to treat them like a commodity belonging to him and yet expropriable at any moment. This raises fears in him. In short, the false attitude towards art is intimately related to anxieties about loss of property; for the fetishistic notion of art as a good which can be owned and, through reflection, destroyed corresponds neatly with the idea of a piece of property in the psychic household.

Like art as a whole, the classification of art as one among the means of enjoyment is a product of historical development. Granted, the magical and animistic predecessors of works of art were components of ritual practices and hence devoid of aesthetic autonomy. But they were certainly not to be enjoyed, for they were sacred. It was only after art had become thoroughly spiritualized that those who did not understand it began

to clamour resentfully for a new species of consumer art that would be able to give them something to enjoy. Conversely, the artists, full of aversion against these demands, were forced to find ever more ingenious ways to spiritualize art even further. No nude Greek sculpture was a pin-up. This explains in part why there is such a friendly attitude in modernism towards the distant past and towards primitive exotic places: modern artists are pleased to find examples there of an art that abstracts from natural objects and their desirability. Hegel, too, in his analysis of what he called symbolic art saw the non-sensuous moment in archaic art. Protesting against the universal mediation of life through commodities, the element of pleasure in art is mediable in its own way, in that he who vanished in a work of art is *ipso facto* exempted from the penury of life. Such pleasure can take on inebriating proportions. At this point one cannot help realizing just how meagre the concept of aesthetic enjoyment really is when we compare it with drunkenness – so meagre, in fact, that what it stands for does not even seem worth going after. Strangely enough, the aesthetic theory that has singled out subjective feeling as the ground of the beautiful has never seriously analysed that feeling. What descriptions there are of it appear, all and sundry, to be lacking in depth. The subjectivist approach to art simply fails to understand that the subjective experience of art in itself is meaningless, and that in order to grasp the importance of art one has to zero in on the artistic object rather than on the fun of the art lover.

The concept of aesthetic enjoyment was a bad compromise between the social essence of art and the critical tendencies inherent in it. Underlying this compromise is a bourgeois mentality which, after sternly noting how useless art is for the business of self-preservation, grudgingly concedes to art a place in society, provided it offers at least a kind of use-value modelled on the phenomenon of sensuous pleasure. This expectation perverts the nature of art as well as the nature of real sensuous pleasure, for art is unable to provide it. There is no denying that an individual who

cannot differentiate sensually between a beautiful sound and a dissonant one, between brilliant colours and dull ones, lacks the ability for artistic experience. But this ability ought not to be hypostatized. To be sure, artistic experience requires a considerable capacity for sensual differentiation as a medium of creativity, but in true art the pleasure component is not given free rein; depending on the time, it is more or less narrowly circumscribed. In periods following an age of asceticism, pleasure became an emancipatory force. This is true of the Renaissance in its relation to the Middle Ages. It is also true of impressionism in its relation to the Victorian age. At other times, the metaphysical content of human sadness manifested itself in art when erotic stimuli were allowed to permeate artistic form. However strong historically the tendency towards a recurrence of pleasure may be, pleasure remains infantile when it asserts itself directly and without mediation. Art absorbs pleasure as remembrance and longing; it does not copy it, does not seek to produce pleasure as an immediate effect. Aversion against the crudely sensuous in art may have been the undoing of impressionism, which had gone too far in the hedonistic direction.

Notes

- 1 H. Kuhn, *Schriften zur Ästhetik* (Munich 1966), pp. 236ff.
- 2 Cf. T. W. Adorno, *Ohne Leitbild. Parva Aesthetica*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt 1968), pp. 168ff.
- 3 [Presumably Adorno is alluding here to the dynamic connotation of *Ursprung* (origin) as a 'primal leap'.]
- 4 [Cf G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 1, section 1, ch. 2.]
- 5 [Scattered parts.]
- 6 [René Laforgue, *The Defeat of Baudelaire: a Psychoanalytical Study of the Neurosis of Charles Baudelaire* (London 1932).]
- 7 I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York 1951), p. 39.
- 8 Ibid., p. 38.
- 9 Ibid., p. 39.
- 10 Ibid., p. 38.

Criteria of Negro Art

W.E.B. Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963) was an American civil rights leader, sociologist, historian, and philosopher who was among the founders of the NAACP. He argues provocatively that art has long been propaganda and should be utilized by black artists in the pursuit of racial justice.

Published in The Crisis of October 1926, DuBois initially spoke these words at a celebration for the recipient of the Twelfth Spingarn Medal, Carter Godwin Woodson. The celebration was part of the NAACP's annual conference and was held in June 1926. (The specific citation for the piece is: The Crisis, Vol. 32, October 1926: pp. 290–297.)

[1] I do not doubt but there are some in this audience who are a little disturbed at the subject of this meeting, and particularly at the subject I have chosen. Such people are thinking something like this: “How is it that an organization like this, a group of radicals trying to bring new things into the world, a fighting organization which has come up out of the blood and dust of battle, struggling for the right of black men to be ordinary human beings – how is it that an organization of this kind can turn aside to talk about Art? After all, what have we who are slaves and black to do with Art?”

[2] Or perhaps there are others who feel a certain relief and are saying, “After all it is rather satisfactory after all this talk about rights and

fighting to sit and dream of something which leaves a nice taste in the mouth”.

[3] Let me tell you that neither of these groups is right. The thing we are talking about tonight is part of the great fight we are carrying on and it represents a forward and an upward look – a pushing onward. You and I have been breasting hills; we have been climbing upward; there has been progress and we can see it day by day looking back along blood-filled paths. But as you go through the valleys and over the foothills, so long as you are climbing, the direction – north, south, east or west – is of less importance. But when gradually the vista widens and you begin to see the world at your feet and the far horizon, then it is time to know more precisely whether you are going and what you really want.

[4] What do we want? What is the thing we are after? As it was phrased last night it had a certain truth: We want to be Americans, full-fledged

Americans, with all the rights of other American citizens. But is that all? Do we want simply to be Americans? Once in a while through all of us there flashes some clairvoyance, some clear idea, of what America really is. We who are dark can see America in a way that white Americans cannot. And seeing our country thus, are we satisfied with its present goals and ideals?

[5] In the high school where I studied we learned most of Scott's "Lady of the Lake" by heart. In after life once it was my privilege to see the lake. It was a Sunday. It was quiet. You could glimpse the deer wandering in unbroken forests; you could hear the soft ripple of romance on the waters. Around me fell the cadence of that poetry of my youth. I fell asleep full of the enchantment of the Scottish border. A new day broke and with it came a sudden rush of excursionists. They were mostly Americans and they were loud and strident. They poured upon the little pleasure boat, – men with their hats a little on one side and drooping cigars in the wet corners of their mouths; women who shared their conversation with the world. They all tried to get everywhere first. They pushed other people out of the way. They made all sorts of incoherent noises and gestures so that the quiet home folk and the visitors from other lands silently and half-wonderingly gave way before them. They struck a note not evil but wrong. They carried, perhaps, a sense of strength and accomplishment, but their hearts had no conception of the beauty which pervaded this holy place.

[6] If you tonight suddenly should become full-fledged Americans; if your color faded, or the color line here in Chicago was miraculously forgotten; suppose, too, you became at the same time rich and powerful; – what is it that you would want? What would you immediately seek? Would you buy the most powerful of motor cars and outrace Cook County? Would you buy the most elaborate estate on the North Shore? Would you be a Rotarian or a Lion or a What-not of the very last degree? Would you wear the most striking clothes, give the richest dinners, and buy the longest press notices?

[7] Even as you visualize such ideals you know in your hearts that these are not the things you really want. You realize this sooner than the average white American because, pushed aside as we have been in America, there has come to us not only a certain distaste for the tawdry and flamboyant but a vision of what the world could be if

it were really a beautiful world; if we had the true spirit; if we had the Seeing Eye, the Cunning Hand, the Feeling Heart; if we had, to be sure, not perfect happiness, but plenty of good hard work, the inevitable suffering that always comes with life; sacrifice and waiting, all that – but, nevertheless, lived in a world where men know, where men create, where they realize themselves and where they enjoy life. It is that sort of a world we want to create for ourselves and for all America.

[8] After all, who shall describe Beauty? What is it? I remember tonight four beautiful things: the Cathedral at Cologne, a forest in stone, set in light and changing shadow, echoing with sunlight and solemn song; a village of the Veys in West Africa, a little thing of mauve and purple, quiet, lying content and shining in the sun; a black and velvet room where on a throne rests, in old and yellowing marble, the broken curves of the Venus de Milo; a single phrase of music in the Southern South – utter melody, haunting and appealing, suddenly arising out of night and eternity, beneath the moon.

[9] Such is Beauty. Its variety is infinite, its possibility is endless. In normal life all may have it and have it yet again. The world is full of it; and yet today the mass of human beings are choked away from it, and their lives distorted and made ugly. This is not only wrong, it is silly. Who shall right this well-nigh universal failing? Who shall let this world be beautiful? Who shall restore to men the glory of sunsets and the peace of quiet sleep?

[10] We black folk may help for we have within us as a race new stirrings; stirrings of the beginning of a new appreciation of joy, of a new desire to create, of a new will to be; as though in this morning of group life we had awakened from some sleep that at once dimly mourns the past and dreams a splendid future; and there has come the conviction that the Youth that is here today, the Negro Youth, is a different kind of Youth, because in some new way it bears this mighty prophecy on its breast, with a new realization of itself, with new determination for all mankind.

[11] What has this Beauty to do with the world? What has Beauty to do with Truth and Goodness – with the facts of the world and the right actions of men? "Nothing," the artists rush to answer. They may be right. I am but an humble disciple of art and cannot presume to say. I am one who tells the truth and exposes evil and

seeks with Beauty and for Beauty to set the world right. That somehow, somewhere eternal and perfect Beauty sits above Truth and Right I can conceive, but here and now and in the world in which I work they are for me unseparated and inseparable.

[12] This is brought to us peculiarly when as artists we face our own past as a people. There has come to us – and it has come especially through the man we are going to honor tonight – a realization of that past, of which for long years we have been ashamed, for which we have apologized. We thought nothing could come out of that past which we wanted to remember; which we wanted to hand down to our children. Suddenly, this same past is taking on form, color, and reality, and in a half shamefaced way we are beginning to be proud of it. We are remembering that the romance of the world did not die and lie forgotten in the Middle Age [sic]; that if you want romance to deal with you must have it here and now and in your own hands.

[13] I once knew a man and woman. They had two children, a daughter who was white and a daughter who was brown; the daughter who was white married a white man; and when her wedding was preparing the daughter who was brown prepared to go and celebrate. But the mother said, "No!" and the brown daughter went into her room and turned on the gas and died. Do you want Greek tragedy swifter than that?

[14] Or again, here is a little Southern town and you are in the public square. On one side of the square is the office of a colored lawyer and on all the other sides are men who do not like colored lawyers. A white woman goes into the black man's office and points to the white-filled square and says, "I want five hundred dollars now and if I do not get it I am going to scream."

[15] Have you heard the story of the conquest of German East Africa? Listen to the untold tale: There were 40,000 black men and 4,000 white men who talked German. There were 20,000 black men and 12,000 white men who talked English. There were 10,000 black men and 400 white men who talked French. In Africa then where the Mountains of the Moon raised their white and snow-capped heads into the mouth of the tropic sun, where Nile and Congo rise and the Great Lakes swim, these men fought; they struggled on mountain, hill and valley, in river, lake

and swamp, until in masses they sickened, crawled and died; until the 4,000 white Germans had become mostly bleached bones; until nearly all the 12,000 white Englishmen had returned to South Africa, and the 400 Frenchmen to Belgium and Heaven; all except a mere handful of the white men died; but thousands of black men from East, West and South Africa, from Nigeria and the Valley of the Nile, and from the West Indies still struggled, fought and died. For four years they fought and won and lost German East Africa; and all you hear about it is that England and Belgium conquered German Africa for the allies!

[16] Such is the true and stirring stuff of which Romance is born and from this stuff come the stirrings of men who are beginning to remember that this kind of material is theirs; and this vital life of their own kind is beckoning them on.

[17] The question comes next as to the interpretation of these new stirrings, of this new spirit: Of what is the colored artist capable? We have had on the part of both colored and white people singular unanimity of judgment in the past. Colored people have said: "This work must be inferior because it comes from colored people." White people have said: "It is inferior because it is done by colored people." But today there is coming to both the realization that the work of the black man is not always inferior. Interesting stories come to us. A professor in the University of Chicago read to a class that had studied literature a passage of poetry and asked them to guess the author. They guessed a goodly company from Shelley and Robert Browning to Tennyson and Masfield. The author was Countée Cullen. Or again the English critic John Drinkwater went down to a Southern seminary, one of the sort which "finishes" young white women of the South. The students sat with their wooden faces while he tried to get some response out of them. Finally he said, "Name me some of your Southern poets". They hesitated. He said finally, "I'll start out with your best: Paul Laurence Dunbar!"

[18] With the growing recognition of Negro artists in spite of the severe handicaps, one comforting thing is occurring to both white and black. They are whispering, "Here is a way out. Here is the real solution of the color problem. The recognition accorded Cullen, Hughes, Fauset, White and others shows there is no real color line. Keep quiet! Don't complain! Work! All will be well!"

[19] I will not say that already this chorus amounts to a conspiracy. Perhaps I am naturally too suspicious. But I will say that there are today a surprising number of white people who are getting great satisfaction out of these younger Negro writers because they think it is going to stop agitation of the Negro question. They say, "What is the use of your fighting and complaining; do the great thing and the reward is there." And many colored people are all too eager to follow this advice; especially those who weary of the eternal struggle along the color line, who are afraid to fight and to whom the money of philanthropists and the alluring publicity are subtle and deadly bribes. They say, "What is the use of fighting? Why not show simply what we deserve and let the reward come to us?"

[20] And it is right here that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People comes upon the field, comes with its great call to a new battle, a new fight and new things to fight before the old things are wholly won; and to say that the Beauty of Truth and Freedom which shall some day be our heritage and the heritage of all civilized men is not in our hands yet and that we ourselves must not fail to realize.

[21] There is in New York tonight a black woman molding clay by herself in a little bare room, because there is not a single school of sculpture in New York where she is welcome. Surely there are doors she might burst through, but when God makes a sculptor He does not always make the pushing sort of person who beats his way through doors thrust in his face. This girl is working her hands off to get out of this country so that she can get some sort of training.

[22] There was Richard Brown. If he had been white he would have been alive today instead of dead of neglect. Many helped him when he asked but he was not the kind of boy that always asks. He was simply one who made colors sing.

[23] There is a colored woman in Chicago who is a great musician. She thought she would like to study at Fontainebleau this summer where Walter Damrosch and a score of leaders of Art have an American school of music. But the application blank of this school says: "I am a white American and I apply for admission to the school."

[24] We can go on the stage; we can be just as funny as white Americans wish us to be; we can play all the sordid parts that America likes to

assign to Negroes; but for any thing else there is still small place for us.

[25] And so I might go on. But let me sum up with this: Suppose the only Negro who survived some centuries hence was the Negro painted by white Americans in the novels and essays they have written. What would people in a hundred years say of black Americans? Now turn it around. Suppose you were to write a story and put in it the kind of people you know and like and imagine. You might get it published and you might not. And the "might not" is still far bigger than the "might". The white publishers catering to white folk would say, "It is not interesting" – to white folk, naturally not. They want Uncle Toms, Topsies, good "darkies" and clowns. I have in my office a story with all the earmarks of truth. A young man says that he started out to write and had his stories accepted. Then he began to write about the things he knew best about, that is, about his own people. He submitted a story to a magazine which said, "We are sorry, but we cannot take it". "I sat down and revised my story, changing the color of the characters and the locale and sent it under an assumed name with a change of address and it was accepted by the same magazine that had refused it, the editor promising to take anything else I might send in providing it was good enough."

[26] We have, to be sure, a few recognized and successful Negro artists; but they are not all those fit to survive or even a good minority. They are but the remnants of that ability and genius among us whom the accidents of education and opportunity have raised on the tidal waves of chance. We black folk are not altogether peculiar in this. After all, in the world at large, it is only the accident, the remnant, that gets the chance to make the most of itself; but if this is true of the white world it is infinitely more true of the colored world. It is not simply the great clear tenor of Roland Hayes that opened the ears of America. We have had many voices of all kinds as fine as his and America was and is as deaf as she was for years to him. Then a foreign land heard Hayes and put its imprint on him and immediately America with all its imitative snobbery woke up. We approved Hayes because London, Paris and Berlin approved him and not simply because he was a great singer.

[27] Thus it is the bounden duty of black America to begin this great work of the creation of

Beauty, of the preservation of Beauty, of the realization of Beauty, and we must use in this work all the methods that men have used before. And what have been the tools of the artist in times gone by? First of all, he has used the Truth – not for the sake of truth, not as a scientist seeking truth, but as one upon whom Truth eternally thrusts itself as the highest handmaid of imagination, as the one great vehicle of universal understanding. Again artists have used Goodness – goodness in all its aspects of justice, honor and right – not for sake of an ethical sanction but as the one true method of gaining sympathy and human interest.

[28] The apostle of Beauty thus becomes the apostle of Truth and Right not by choice but by inner and outer compulsion. Free he is but his freedom is ever bounded by Truth and Justice; and slavery only dogs him when he is denied the right to tell the Truth or recognize an ideal of Justice.

[29] Thus all Art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent.

[30] In New York we have two plays: "White Congo" and "Congo". In "White Congo" there is a fallen woman. She is black. In "Congo" the fallen woman is white. In "White Congo" the black woman goes down further and further and in "Congo" the white woman begins with degradation but in the end is one of the angels of the Lord.

[31] You know the current magazine story: A young white man goes down to Central America and the most beautiful colored woman there falls in love with him. She crawls across the whole isthmus to get to him. The white man says nobly, "No". He goes back to his white sweetheart in New York.

[32] In such cases, it is not the positive propaganda of people who believe white blood divine, infallible and holy to which I object. It is the denial of a similar right of propaganda to those who believe black blood human, lovable and inspired with new ideals for the world. White artists themselves suffer from this narrowing of their field. They cry for freedom in dealing with Negroes because they have so little freedom in

dealing with whites. DuBose Heywood [sic: Heyward] writes "Porgy" and writes beautifully of the black Charleston underworld. But why does he do this? Because he cannot do a similar thing for the white people of Charleston, or they would drum him out of town. The only chance he had to tell the truth of pitiful human degradation was to tell it of colored people. I should not be surprised if Octavius Roy Cohen [sic: Octavus] had approached the Saturday Evening Post and asked permission to write about a different kind of colored folk than the monstrosities he has created; but if he has, the Post has replied, "No. You are getting paid to write about the kind of colored people you are writing about."

[33] In other words, the white public today demands from its artists, literary and pictorial, racial prejudgment which deliberately distorts Truth and Justice, as far as colored races are concerned, and it will pay for no other.

[34] On the other hand, the young and slowly growing black public still wants its prophets almost equally unfree. We are bound by all sorts of customs that have come down as second-hand soul clothes of white patrons. We are ashamed of sex and we lower our eyes when people will talk of it. Our religion holds us in superstition. Our worst side has been so shamelessly emphasized that we are denying we have or ever had a worst side. In all sorts of ways we are hemmed in and our new young artists have got to fight their way to freedom.

[35] The ultimate judge has got to be you and you have got to build yourselves up into that wide judgment, that catholicity of temper which is going to enable the artist to have his widest chance for freedom. We can afford the Truth. White folk today cannot. As it is now we are handing everything over to a white jury. If a colored man wants to publish a book, he has got to get a white publisher and a white newspaper to say it is great; and then you and I say so. We must come to the place where the work of art when it appears is reviewed and acclaimed by our own free and unfettered judgment. And we are going to have a real and valuable and eternal judgment only as we make ourselves free of mind, proud of body and just of soul to all men.

[36] And then do you know what will be said? It is already saying. Just as soon as true Art emerges; just as soon as the black artist appears,

someone touches the race on the shoulder and says, "He did that because he was an American, not because he was a Negro; he was born here; he was trained here; he is not a Negro – what is a Negro anyhow? He is just human; it is the kind of thing you ought to expect."

[37] I do not doubt that the ultimate art coming from black folk is going to be just as beautiful, and beautiful largely in the same ways, as the art that comes from white folk, or yellow, or red; but the point today is that until the art of the black folk compells [sic] recognition they will not be rated as

human. And when through art they compell [sic] recognition then let the world discover if it will that their art is as new as it is old and as old as new.

[38] I had a classmate once who did three beautiful things and died. One of them was a story of a folk who found fire and then went wandering in the gloom of night seeking again the stars they had once known and lost; suddenly out of blackness they looked up and there loomed the heavens; and what was it that they said? They raised a mighty cry: "It is the stars, it is the ancient stars, it is the young and everlasting stars!"

Art or Propaganda?

Alain Locke

Alain LeRoy Locke (1885–1954) was an American critic, philosopher, and aesthetic theorist who has been hailed the “Father of the Harlem Renaissance.” He disagreed with W.E.B. Du Bois on whether true art should be understood as propaganda, and counseled black artists rather toward personal, artistic expression.

Artistically it is the one fundamental question for us today, — Art or Propaganda. Which? Is this more the generation of the prophet or that of the poet; shall our intellectual and cultural leadership preach and exhort or sing? I believe we are at that interesting moment when the prophet becomes the poet and when prophecy becomes the expressive song, the chant of fulfillment. We have had too many Jeremiahs, major and minor; — and too much of the drab wilderness. My chief objection to propaganda, apart from its besetting sin of monotony and disproportion, is that it perpetuates the position of group inferiority even in crying out against it. For it leaves and speaks under the shadow of a dominant majority whom it harangues, cajoles, threatens or supplicates. It is too extroverted for balance or poise or inner dignity and self-respect. Art in the best sense is rooted in self-expression and whether naive or sophisticated is self-contained. In our spiritual

growth genius and talent must more and more choose the role of group expression, or even at times the role of free individualistic expression, — in a word must choose art and put aside propaganda.

The literature and art of the younger generation already reflects this shift of psychology, this regeneration of spirit. David should be its patron saint: it should confront the Philistines with its five smooth pebbles fearlessly.¹ There is more strength in a confident camp than in a threatened enemy. The sense of inferiority must be innerly compensated, self-conviction must supplant self-justification and in the dignity of this attitude a convinced minority must confront a condescending majority. Art cannot completely accomplish this, but I believe it can lead the way.

Our espousal of art thus becomes no mere idle acceptance of “art for art’s sake,” or cultivation of the last decadences of the over-civilized, but rather a deep realization of the fundamental purpose of art and of its function as a tap root of vigorous, flourishing living. Not all of our younger writers are deep enough in the sub-soil of their native materials — too many are pot-plants

Alain Locke, “Art or Propaganda?” in *Harlem* 1(1), November 1928. Public domain.

seeking a forced growth according to the exotic tastes of a pampered and decadent public. It is the art of the people that needs to be cultivated, not the art of the coteries. Propaganda itself is preferable to shallow, truckling imitation. Negro things may reasonably be a fad for others; for us they must be a religion. Beauty, however, is its best priest and psalms will be more effective than sermons.

To date we have had little sustained art unsubsidized by propaganda; we must admit this debt to these foster agencies. The three journals which have been vehicles of most of our artistic expressions have been the avowed organs of social movements and organized social programs. All our purely artistic publications have been sporadic. There is all the greater need then for a sustained vehicle of free and purely artistic expression. If *HARLEM* should happily fill this need, it will perform an honorable and constructive service. I hope it may, but should it not, the need remains and the path toward it will at least be advanced a little.²

We need, I suppose in addition to art some substitute for propaganda. What shall that be? Surely we must take some cognizance of the fact that we live at the centre of a social problem. Propaganda at least nurtured some form of serious social discussion, and social discussion was necessary, is still necessary. On this side; the difficulty and

shortcoming of propaganda is its partisanship. It is one-sided and often pre-judging. Should we not then have a journal of free discussion, open to all sides of the problem and to all camps of belief? Difficult, that, — but intriguing. Even if it has to begin on the note of dissent and criticism and assume Menckonian scepticism³ to escape the common-places of conformity. Yet, I hope we shall not remain at this negative pole. Can we not cultivate truly free and tolerant discussion, almost Socratically minded for the sake of truth? After Beauty, let Truth come into the Renaissance picture, — a later cue, but a welcome one. This may be premature, but one hopes not, — for eventually it must come and if we can accomplish that, instead of having to hang our prophets, we can silence them or change their lamentations to song with a Great Fulfillment.

Notes

- 1 1 Samuel 17: Biblical account of King David's victory over the Philistine warrior Goliath.
- 2 *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life*, a literary and arts magazine founded by black writer Wallace Thurman, folded after its second issue.
- 3 Henry Lewis Mencken, founder and editor of *American Mercury* (1925–1933), was famed for his satirical and acerbic commentary on American society.

Part III

Contemporary Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art

Introduction

Stephanie Ross

Stephanie Ross is Professor Emerita of Philosophy at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. She is the author of *What Gardens Mean* and of chapters and papers on a variety of topics in aesthetics. Her new book, *Two Thumbs Up: How Critics Aid Appreciation* is forthcoming.

The selections in this section of the volume reflect work aestheticians and philosophers of art have conducted from the last half of the 20th century to the present time. It overwhelmingly represents work within the analytic tradition, and it predominantly takes up issues relevant to Western art.

Many aestheticians in this period rejected the notion of beauty as the hallmark of genuine and worthy art; they also turned their backs on the long tradition of essentialist theories that proposed specific traits or functions as criterial for art. Yet they remained in the grip of the question “What is art?” In part, the non-essentialist turn was triggered by goings-on in the philosophy of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein’s approach to the workings of general terms encouraged theorists to look for family resemblances amongst the arts rather than to craft real definitions (definitions in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions). Morris Weitz’s groundbreaking article “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics” argued that art is an open concept, always subject to revolutionary advances.¹ Maurice Mandelbaum’s paper “Family Resemblances and Generalizations Concerning

the Arts” countered that the commonality uniting works of art was not some exhibited or manifest property one could read off of each work, but rather a contextual feature, something about the way we treat art objects.² This was congruent with the insight that prompted Arthur Danto’s ringing statement “To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of history of art: an artworld.”³ Danto arrived at this epiphany viewing Pop Art exhibitions in the 1960s. There items such as Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* and *Campbell’s Soup Cans* that looked exactly like their commercial counterparts prompted him to ponder the case of indiscernibles – pairs that could not be perceptually distinguished but whose ontological status differed in that only one of them counted as a work of art. Danto’s ruminations about such matters are captured in his groundbreaking article “The Artworld.” George Dickie took Danto’s neologism and ran with it, developing the Institutional Theory of Art. On Dickie’s view, art is an acquired status; something becomes art when presented, under suitable circumstances, to members of a particular institution, the artworld.

Relentless criticism forced Dickie to scale back his claim that there was a formal institution of this nature. In later versions of his theory, he instead proposed that the artworld exists at the level of an informal practice.⁴ While the notion of an artworld is an extremely useful heuristic, puzzling questions remain about boundaries: just how should artworlds be identified and individuated? Presumably 17th-century Tokyo, 19th-century Paris, and 20th-century New York represent distinct artworlds. But what about 21st-century New York and 21st-century San Francisco? There is also the worry that the Institutional Theory of Art is overly permissive. It does seem the case that in the artworld today, anything goes. But various versions of the Institutional Theory threaten to make art ubiquitous and the term “art” practically useless.

Other non-essentialist theories were developed in the latter decades of the 20th century to answer the question “What is art?” Both Jerrold Levinson and Noël Carroll proposed historical theories. Levinson suggested that something is art if it is regarded in a way that artworks were regarded in the past.⁵ Of course, this raises another riddle of individuation – how are we to individuate regards? By contrast, Carroll introduced the notion of an identifying narrative to suggest that difficult avant-garde works can be vetted as art if we can construct a narrative showing their continuity with unquestioned works from the past.⁶ But then the question inevitably arises, how do we judge the adequacy of proposed narratives? Berys Gaut developed a different sort of non-essentialist theory, one indebted to Wittgenstein’s family resemblance account of general terms. His paper “Art as a Cluster Concept” is included in this volume along with those of Danto and Dickie.

In addition to asking the general question “What is art?” philosophers investigated ontological puzzles posed by the nature of particular arts. The ontological status of the so-called plastic arts – painting, sculpture, architecture – seems relatively unproblematic. Each work is a unique and enduring physical object. Although multiplicity can pose puzzles even here: consider printmaking, cast sculpture, Levittown. Determining the nature – and locus! – of the performing arts is more challenging, as scripts and scores underdetermine the works that flow from them. Moreover,

those works can be performed multiple times with varying interpretations; competing productions of a given work can tour the country at one and the same time. The chapter from Stephen Davies’s book *The Philosophy of Art* offers an overview of these ontological puzzles; Davies motivates his topic by reminding us of that age-old classificatory question “Animal, vegetable, or mineral?” Levinson’s renowned paper “What a Musical Work Is” takes up the question of identity of classical music, while Amie Thomasson’s account of fictional characters plumbs some of the complexities that arise when we contemplate the nature of literary works. Recently, philosophers have defended the art status of new and challenging entities and activities; there is now a growing literature on the aesthetics of games (Grant Tavinor), gardens (Mara Miller, Stephanie Ross), food (Carolyn Korsmeyer, Elizabeth Telfer), tattoos (Eva Dadlez), graffiti and street art (Sondra Bachrach), magic and illusion (James Leddington), and more. Philosophers have also explored our aesthetic encounters with non-art entities. Allen Carlson has done pioneering work on landscape appreciation, while Yuriko Saito and Tom Leddy have helped to legitimate the aesthetics of everyday life. Papers by Korsmeyer, Carlson, and Saito are included in this collection.

Once we agree on a set of exemplars that count as works of art, questions arise about their properties and powers. In his seminal paper “Aesthetic Concepts,” Frank Sibley called attention to the special class of aesthetic properties.⁷ He maintained that these properties are not condition governed, that is, no set of perceptual properties is sufficient for the ascription of a given aesthetic property. Sibley concluded that aesthetic properties can only be discerned through the exercise of taste and perceptiveness. Considering this same class, Kendall Walton argued in his paper “Categories of Art” that the aesthetic properties ascribed to a work vary with how it is categorized and raised the question of whether, for each work, there is a proper category to which it should be assigned.⁸

Many works of art are representational – they have content, either mirroring the actual world or creating alternative worlds. Attention to this aspect of art dates back to ancient times. Like his predecessor Plato, Aristotle deemed all art

mimetic. His analysis of tragedy in the *Poetics* shows why poetry, drama, and literature are properly deemed imitations of human action. These narrative arts present us with cognitively rich and compellingly plausible characters and situations. Present-day attention to narrative is a recent outgrowth of this long-lived trend, and a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* took up philosophical issues surrounding this topic.⁹ Contemporary philosophers have also addressed pictorial representation. Roger Scruton famously argued that photographs are incapable of representing due to their mechanical origin, but present-day students and practitioners have little patience for his dismissal of photography as a representational art form.¹⁰ Walton defends an equally radical view when he argues for the transparency of photographs, claiming that they are prosthetic aids for vision, on a par with eyeglasses, binoculars, periscopes, and more.

In addition to charting the representational powers of various arts, contemporary philosophers have been intent on examining the relations between art and emotion. Such attention has intensified with the rehabilitation of emotion since Plato's time. The improved reputation of emotional states can perhaps be traced to a set of papers and books from the late 1950s through the late 1980s distinguishing emotion from mere feeling and arguing that emotions possess a cognitive component that both directs and individuates them.¹¹ Thus fear responds to a perceived threat, anger to perceived mistreatment, hope to the prospect of future good, and so on. Emotions are now welcomed as modes of appraisal and ways of knowing. The many possible relations between art and emotion include the following: art expresses and clarifies the artist's inchoate feelings (Benedetto Croce, R.G. Collingwood), art unites people by infecting them with one and the same emotion (Leo Tolstoy), art shows the form of emotion without requiring it be possessed by the artist or their audience (Susanne Langer). Most recently, aestheticians have profited from psychological and neurological research and formulated accounts of our interactions with art that are informed by recent experimentation and the findings of present-day science. Both Jenefer Robinson and Jesse Prinz have endorsed versions of the James–Lange theory of the 1880s (owed to the psychologist William James and the

physician Carl Lange). They see emotion as initiated by bodily disturbance in one way or another. Since such disturbance is often triggered by goings-on in the world, emotions can be rightly understood as a helpful (rather than encumbering) form of appraisal.

A variety of issues involving emotion engage present-day aestheticians. For example, the paradox of fiction asks how we can respond emotionally to characters and situations that we know to be non-existent, while the related paradoxes of tragedy and of horror ask why we willingly subject ourselves to inherently unpleasant, negatively-valenced emotions. Newer work has examined hitherto overlooked emotions, for instance Korsmeyer's study of disgust, and work by Derek Matravers, Robinson, and others examines empathy, the ability to feel emotion on another's behalf, which seems singularly apt when we turn our attention to narrative works of art.¹²

Beyond asking about the representational and expressive powers of artworks, philosophers of art ponder their reception. How are we to understand and interpret the works with which we engage? Is there one right interpretation, perhaps aligned with the creator's intentions? William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley famously argued that such intentions are neither available nor desirable for this purpose.¹³ At the time intentions seemed private mental entities that we might never be able to access. Living artists might always hide their intentions, lie to us about them, or, more radically, be self-deceived about the impulses generating their work. Retrieving the intentions of deceased artists seems even more daunting. Wimsatt and Beardsley also pointed out that artists can fail to realize their intentions; in such cases, attributing them to the work would lead us astray. The pendulum has swung away from this extreme form of denial. Philosophers today debate which version of intentionalism should be favored, with actual intentionalism competing against hypothetical intentionalism, and moderate and extreme versions on offer for each. Hypothetical intentionalists urge us to posit the aims most plausibly attributed to the author (or implied author) based on what we find in the work itself. Breakthroughs in science and technology may well shape these debates, as computer analysis of lengthy works helps identify the components of individual style, while neuro-aesthetics

seeks to uncover the cognitive underpinnings of appreciative response. Papers by Robinson, Carroll, and Alexander Nehamas included here reflect on aspects of literary understanding.

Many other questions arise for contemporary aesthetics. We have touched on issues of interpretation, but how willing should we be to allow multiple interpretations of each work; can we at least rule out some candidate interpretations as non-starters? How should we understand the value of art? Is it adequately glossed as the value of the experiences it triggers? What normative boundaries should be in place here? Do works that present, or perhaps endorse, morally flawed views accrue aesthetic flaws as a result? And what role, if any, should we accord to expertise? Are the opinions of some appreciators more valid than those of others? Are there individuals to whom should we defer in selecting and understanding works of art? Richard Shusterman has argued that David Hume's and Immanuel Kant's attempts to establish aesthetic value merely institutionalized the elitist preferences of their class and time.¹⁴ But other contemporary philosophers support some degree of aesthetic realism. Levinson's paper "Artistic Worth and Personal Taste," included in this volume, defends a neo-Humean view.

Increasingly aestheticians have taken up the challenge of identity politics, contesting established canons and posing such questions as "Why have there been No Great Women Artists?" and "Are Art Museums Racist?"¹⁵ Contemporary aestheticians wrestle with cultural attitudes towards bodies and beauty and take pains to identify and combat the strains of sexism, racism, and ableism.¹⁶ A.W. Eaton's overview of feminist aesthetics, included here, samples some of these issues. Aesthetics today remains a vibrant, rewarding, and open-ended field. It is hoped that the papers in this concluding section of *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* will prompt readers to embrace these issues and continue to seek out and support the new voices contributing to the conversation.

Notes

- 1 Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15 (1956), 27–35.
- 2 Maurice Mandelbaum, "Family Resemblances and Generalizations Concerning the Arts,"

American Philosophical Quarterly 2:3 (1965), 219–28. Mandelbaum's posit of a non-exhibited relational property common to all works of art was intended to parallel the common genetic endowment that he believed underlay and explained the perceived resemblances among members of a given family.

- 3 Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* LXI (1964), 571–84.
- 4 See for example George Dickie, "The New Institutional Theory of Art," *Proceeding of the 8th International Wittgenstein Symposium* (Wein, 1984).
- 5 Jerrold Levinson, "Defining Art Historically," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19:3 (1971), 21–33.
- 6 See both "Identifying Art" and "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art" in Noël Carroll's collection *Beyond Aesthetics* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 75–118.
- 7 Frank Sibley, "Aesthetic Concepts," *Philosophical Review* LXVII (1959), 421–50.
- 8 Kendall Walton, "Categories of Art," *Philosophical Review* 79:3 (1970), 334–67.
- 9 *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67:1 (2009) Special issue: "The Poetics, Aesthetics, and Philosophy of Narrative" edited by Noël Carroll.
- 10 Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 7:3 (1981), 577–603.
- 11 See for example Errol Bedford, "Emotions," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 57 (1957), 281–304; Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will* (London; New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Humanities Press, 1963); Irving Thalberg, *Perception, Emotion and Action* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); William Lyons, *Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980);, and Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).
- 12 Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Derek Matravers, *Empathy* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2017); Jenefer Robinson, "Empathy for Pictures" in; Elisabeth Schellekens (Ed.) *Aesthetic Normativity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); and "Empathy and Music" in Heidi Maibon (Ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy* (London: Routledge, 2017).
- 13 William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 54:3 (1946), 468–88.
- 14 Richard Shusterman, "Of the Scandal of Taste: Social Privilege as Nature in the Aesthetic Theories of Hume and Kant," *Philosophical Forum* 20:3, (1981), 211–29.

- 15 See Linda Nochlin, "Why have there been No Great Women Artists" in Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran (Eds) *Women in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness* (Macmillan, 1971); Maurice Berger, "Are Art Museums Racist?", *Art in America* 78:9 (1990), 68–77.
- 16 For example, see Peg Zeglin Brand, *Beauty Matters* (Indiana University Press, 2000); Sherri Irvin, *Body Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

The Artworld

Arthur Danto

Arthur Danto (1924–2013) was Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University and an art critic for *The Nation*.

Hamlet:

Do you see nothing there!

The Queen:

Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene IV

Hamlet and Socrates, though in praise and deprecation respectively, spoke of art as a mirror held up to nature. As with many disagreements in attitude, this one has a factual basis. Socrates saw mirrors as but reflecting what we can already see; so art, insofar as mirrorlike, yields idle accurate duplications of the appearances of things, and is of no cognitive benefit whatever. Hamlet, more acutely, recognized a remarkable feature of reflecting surfaces, namely that they show us what we could not otherwise perceive – our own face and form – and so art, insofar as it is mirrorlike, reveals us to ourselves, and is, even by socratic criteria, of some cognitive utility after all. As a philosopher, however, I find Socrates' discussion defective on other, perhaps less profound grounds than these. If a mirror-image of *o* is indeed an imitation of *o*, then, if art is imitation, mirror-images are art. But in fact mirror-

ing objects no more is art than returning weapons to a madman is justice; and reference to mirrorings would be just the sly sort of counterinstance we would expect Socrates to bring forward in rebuttal of the theory he instead uses them to illustrate. If that theory requires us to class *these* as art, it thereby shows its inadequacy: "is an imitation" will not do as a sufficient condition for "is art." Yet, perhaps because artists *were* engaged in imitation, in Socrates' time and after, the insufficiency of the theory was not noticed until the invention of photography. Once rejected as a sufficient condition, mimesis was quickly discarded as even a necessary one; and since the achievement of Kandinsky, mimetic features have been relegated to the periphery of critical concern, so much so that some works survive in spite of possessing those virtues, excellence in which was once celebrated as the essence of art, narrowly escaping demotion to mere illustrations.

It is, of course, indispensable in socratic discussion that all participants be masters of the concept up for analysis, since the aim is to match

a real defining expression to a term in active use, and the test for adequacy presumably consists in showing that the former analyzes and applies to all and only those things of which the latter is true. The popular disclaimer notwithstanding, then, Socrates' auditors purportedly knew what art was as well as what they liked; and a theory of art, regarded here as a real definition of 'Art', is accordingly not to be of great use in helping men to recognize instances of its application. Their antecedent ability to do this is precisely what the adequacy of the theory is to be tested against, the problem being only to make explicit what they already know. It is *our* use of the term that the theory allegedly means to capture, but we are supposed able, in the words of a recent writer, "to separate those objects which are works of art from those which are not, because . . . we know how correctly to use the word 'art' and to apply the phrase 'work of art'." Theories, on this account, are somewhat like mirror-images on Socrates' account, showing forth what we already know, wordy reflections of the actual linguistic practice we are masters in.

But telling artworks from other things is not so simple a matter, even for native speakers, and these days one might not be aware he was on artistic terrain without an artistic theory to tell him so. And part of the reason for this lies in the fact that terrain is constituted artistic in virtue of artistic theories, so that one use of theories, in addition to helping us discriminate art from the rest, consists in making art possible. Glaucon and the others could hardly have known what was art and what not: otherwise they would never have been taken in by mirror-images.

I

Suppose one thinks of the discovery of a whole new class of artworks as something analogous to the discovery of a whole new class of facts anywhere, viz., as something for theoreticians to explain. In science, as elsewhere, we often accommodate new facts to old theories via auxiliary hypotheses, a pardonable enough conservatism when the theory in question is deemed too valuable to be jettisoned all at once. Now the Imitation Theory of Art (IT) is, if one but thinks it through, an exceedingly powerful theory, explain-

ing a great many phenomena connected with the causation and evaluation of artworks, bringing a surprising unity into a complex domain. Moreover, it is a simple matter to shore it up against many purported counterinstances by such auxiliary hypotheses as that the artist who deviates from mimeticity is perverse, inept, or mad. Ineptitude, chicanery, or folly are, in fact, testable predications. Suppose, then, tests reveal that these hypotheses fail to hold, that the theory, now beyond repair, must be replaced. And a new theory is worked out, capturing what it can of the old theory's competence, together with the heretofore recalcitrant facts. One might, thinking along these lines, represent certain episodes in the history of art as not dissimilar to certain episodes in the history of science, where a conceptual revolution is being effected and where refusal to countenance certain facts, while in part due to prejudice, inertia, and self-interest, is due also to the fact that a well-established, or at least widely credited theory is being threatened in such a way that all coherence goes.

Some such episode transpired with the advent of post-impressionist paintings. In terms of the prevailing artistic theory (IT), it was impossible to accept these as art unless inept art: otherwise they could be discounted as hoaxes, self-advertisements, or the visual counterparts of madmen's ravings. So to get them accepted *as* art, on a footing with the *Transfiguration* (not to speak of a Landseer stag), required not so much a revolution in taste as a theoretical revision of rather considerable proportions, involving not only the artistic enfranchisement of these objects, but an emphasis upon newly significant features of accepted artworks, so that quite different accounts of their status as artworks would now have to be given. As a result of the new theory's acceptance, not only were post-impressionist paintings taken up as art, but numbers of objects (masks, weapons, etc.) were transferred from anthropological museums (and heterogeneous other places) to *musées des beaux arts*, though, as we would expect from the fact that a criterion for the acceptance of a new theory is that it account for whatever the older one did, nothing had to be transferred out of the *musée des beaux arts* – even if there were internal rearrangements as between storage rooms and exhibition space. Countless native speakers hung upon suburban

mantelpieces innumerable replicas of paradigm cases for teaching the expression 'work of art' that would have sent their Edwardian forebears into linguistic apoplexy.

To be sure, I distort by speaking of a theory: historically, there were several, all, interestingly enough, more or less defined in terms of the IT. Art-historical complexities must yield before the exigencies of logical exposition, and I shall speak as though there were one replacing theory, partially compensating for historical falsity by choosing one which was actually enunciated. According to it, the artists in question were to be understood not as unsuccessfully imitating real forms but as successfully creating new ones, quite as real as the forms which the older art had been thought, in its best examples, to be creditably imitating. Art, after all, had long since been thought of as creative (Vasari says that God was the first artist), and the post-impressionists were to be explained as genuinely creative, aiming, in Roger Fry's words, "not at illusion but reality." This theory (RT) furnished a whole new mode of looking at painting, old and new. Indeed, one might almost interpret the crude drawing in Van Gogh and Cézanne, the dislocation of form from contour in Rouault and Dufy, the arbitrary use of color planes in Gauguin and the Fauves, as so many ways of drawing attention to the fact that these were *non-imitations*, specifically intended not to deceive. Logically, this would be roughly like printing "Not Legal Tender" across a brilliantly counterfeited dollar bill, the resulting object (counterfeit *cum* inscription) rendered incapable of deceiving anyone. It is not an illusory dollar bill, but then, just because it is non-illusory it does not automatically become a real dollar bill either. It rather occupies a freshly opened area between real objects and real facsimiles of real objects: it is a non-facsimile, if one requires a word, and a new contribution to the world. Thus, Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters*, as a consequence of certain unmistakable distortions, turns out to be a non-facsimile of real-life potato eaters; and inasmuch as these are not facsimiles of potato eaters, Van Gogh's picture, as a non-imitation, had as much right to be called a real object as did its putative subjects. By means of this theory (RT), artworks re-entered the thick of things from which socratic theory (IT) had sought to evict them: if no *more* real than what carpenters

wrought, they were at least no *less* real. The Post-Impressionist won a victory in ontology.

It is in terms of RT that we must understand the artworks around us today. Thus Roy Lichtenstein paints comic-strip panels, though ten or twelve feet high. These are reasonably faithful projections onto a gigantesque scale of the homely frames from the daily tabloid, but it is precisely the scale that counts. A skilled engraver might incise *The Virgin and the Chancellor Rollin* on a pinhead, and it would be recognizable as such to the keen of sight, but an engraving of a Barnett Newman on a similar scale would be a blob, disappearing in the reduction. A *photograph* of a Lichtenstein is indiscernible from a photograph of a counterpart panel from *Steve Canyon*; but the photograph fails to capture the scale, and hence is as inaccurate a reproduction as a black-and-white engraving of Botticelli, scale being essential here as color there. Lichtensteins, then, are not imitations but *new entities*, as giant whelks would be. Jasper Johns, by contrast, paints objects with respect to which questions of scale are irrelevant. Yet his objects cannot be imitations, for they have the remarkable property that any intended copy of a member of this class of objects is automatically a member of the class itself, so that these objects are logically inimitable. Thus, a copy of a numeral just *is* that numeral: a painting of 3 is a 3 made of paint. Johns, in addition, paints targets, flags, and maps. Finally, in what I hope are not unwitting footnotes to Plato, two of our pioneers – Robert Rauschenberg and Claes Oldenburg – have made genuine beds.

Rauschenberg's bed hangs on a wall, and is streaked with some desultory housepaint. Oldenburg's bed is a rhomboid, narrower at one end than the other, with what one might speak of as a built-in perspective: ideal for small bedrooms. As beds, these sell at singularly inflated prices, but one *could* sleep in either of them: Rauschenberg has expressed the fear that someone might just climb into his bed and fall asleep. Imagine, now, a certain Testadura – a plain speaker and noted philistine – who is not aware that these are art, and who takes them to be reality simple and pure. He attributes the paintstreaks on Rauschenberg's bed to the slovenliness of the owner, and the bias in the Oldenburg bed to the ineptitude of the builder or the whimsy, perhaps, of whoever had it "custom-made." These would be mistakes, but

mistakes of rather an odd kind, and not terribly different from that made by the stunned birds who pecked the sham grapes of Zeuxis. They mistook art for reality, and so has Testadura. But it was meant to *be* reality, according to RT. Can one have mistaken reality for reality? How shall we describe Testadura's error? What, after all, prevents Oldenburg's creation from being a misshapen bed? This is equivalent to asking what makes it art, and with this query we enter a domain of conceptual inquiry where native speakers are poor guides: *they* are lost themselves.

II

To mistake an artwork for a real object is no great feat when an artwork is the real object one mistakes it for. The problem is how to avoid such errors, or to remove them once they are made. The artwork is a bed, and not a bed-illusion; so there is nothing like the traumatic encounter against a flat surface that brought it home to the birds of Zeuxis that they had been duped. Except for the guard cautioning Testadura not to sleep on the artworks, he might never have discovered that this was an artwork and not a bed; and since, after all, one cannot discover that a bed is not a bed, how is Testadura to realize that he has made an error? A certain sort of explanation is required, for the error here is a curiously philosophical one, rather like, if we may assume as correct some well-known views of P. F. Strawson, mistaking a person for a material body when the truth is that a person *is* a material body in the sense that a whole class of predicates, sensibly applicable to material bodies, are sensibly, and by appeal to no different criteria, applicable to persons. So you cannot *discover* that a person is not a material body.

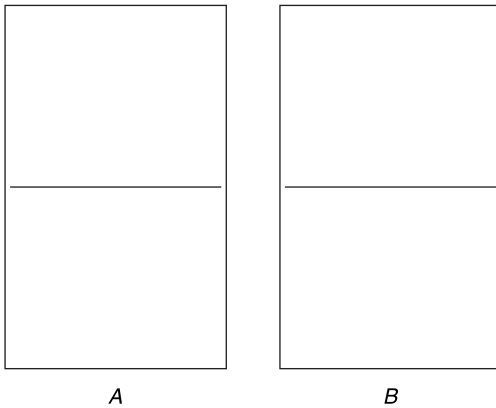
We begin by explaining, perhaps, that the paintstreaks are not to be explained away, that they are *part* of the object, so the object is not a mere bed with – as it happens – streaks of paint spilled over it, but a complex object fabricated out of a bed and some paintstreaks: a paint-bed. Similarly, a person is not a material body with – as it happens – some thoughts superadded, but is a complex entity made up of a body and some

conscious states: a conscious-body. Persons, like artworks, must then be taken as irreducible to *parts* of themselves, and are in that sense primitive. Or, more accurately, the paintstreaks are not part of the real object – the bed – which happens to be part of the artwork, but are, *like* the bed, part of the artwork as such. And this might be generalized into a rough characterization of artworks that happen to contain real objects as parts of themselves: not every part of an artwork *A* is part of a real object *R* when *R* is part of *A* and can, moreover, be detached from *A* and seen *merely* as *R*. The mistake thus far will have been to mistake *A* for *part* of itself, namely *R*, even though it would not be incorrect to say that *A* is *R*, that the artwork is a bed. It is the 'is' which requires clarification here.

There is an *is* that figures prominently in statements concerning artworks which is not the *is* of either identity or predication; nor is it the *is* of existence, of identification, or some special *is* made up to serve a philosophic end. Nevertheless, it is in common usage, and is readily mastered by children. It is the sense of *is* in accordance with which a child, shown a circle and a triangle and asked which is him and which his sister, will point to the triangle saying "That is me"; or, in response to my question, the person next to me points to the man in purple and says "That one is Lear"; or in the gallery I point, for my companion's benefit, to a spot in the painting before us and say "That white dab is Icarus." We do not mean, in these instances, that whatever is pointed to stands for, or represents, what it is said to be, for the word 'Icarus' stands for or represents Icarus: yet I would not in the same sense of *is* point to the word and say "That is Icarus." The sentence "That *a* is *b*" is perfectly compatible with "That *a* is not *b*" when the first employs this sense of *is* and the second employs some other, though *a* and *b* are used nonambiguously throughout. Often, indeed, the truth of the first *requires* the truth of the second. The first, in fact, is incompatible with "That *a* is not *b*" only when the *is* is used nonambiguously throughout. For want of a word I shall designate this the *is* of *artistic identification*; in each case in which it is used, the *a* stands for some specific physical property of, or physical part of, an object; and, finally, it is a necessary condition for something to be an artwork that some part or property

of it be designable by the subject of a sentence that employs this special *is*. It is an *is*, incidentally, which has near-relatives in marginal and mythical pronouncements. (Thus, one *is* Quetzalcoatl; those *are* the Pillars of Hercules.)

Let me illustrate. Two painters are asked to decorate the east and west walls of a science library with frescoes to be respectively called *Newton's First Law* and *Newton's Third Law*. These paintings, when finally unveiled, look, scale apart, as follows:



As objects I shall suppose the works to be indiscernible: a black, horizontal line on a white ground, equally large in each dimension and element. *B* explains his work as follows: a mass, pressing downward, is met by a mass pressing upward: the lower mass reacts equally and oppositely to the upper one. *A* explains his work as follows: the line through the space is the path of an isolated particle. The path goes from edge to edge, to give the sense of its *going beyond*. If it ended or began within the space, the line would be curved: and it is parallel to the top and bottom edges, for if it were closer to one than to another, there would have to be a force accounting for it, and this is inconsistent with its being the path of an *isolated* particle.

Much follows from these artistic identifications. To regard the middle line as an edge (mass meeting mass) imposes the need to identify the top and bottom half of the picture as rectangles, and as two distinct parts (not necessarily as two masses, for the line could be the edge of *one* mass jutting up – or down – into empty space). If it is an edge, we cannot thus take the entire area of

the painting as a single space: it is rather composed of two forms, or one form and a non-form. We could take the entire area as a single space only by taking the middle horizontal as a *line* which is not an edge. But this almost requires a three-dimensional identification of the whole picture: the area can be a flat surface which the line is *above* (*Jet-flight*), or *below* (*Submarine-path*), or *on* (*Line*), or *in* (*Fissure*), or *through* (*Newton's First Law*) – though in this last case the area is not a flat surface but a transparent cross section of absolute space. We could make all these prepositional qualifications clear by imagining perpendicular cross sections to the picture plane. Then, depending upon the applicable prepositional clause, the area is (artistically) interrupted or not by the horizontal element. If we take the line as *through* space, the edges of the picture are not really the edges of the space: the space goes beyond the picture if the line itself does; and we are in the same space as the line is. As *B*, the edges of the picture can be *part* of the picture in case the masses go right to the edges, so that the edges of the picture are *their* edges. In that case, the vertices of the picture would be the vertices of the masses, except that the masses have four vertices more than the picture itself does: here four vertices would be part of the art work which were not part of the real object. Again, the faces of the masses could be the face of the picture, and in looking at the picture, we are looking at these faces: but *space* has no face, and on the reading of *A* the work has to be read as faceless, and the face of the physical object would not be part of the artwork. Notice here how one artistic identification engenders another artistic identification, and how, consistently with a given identification, we are *required* to give others and *precluded* from still others: indeed, a given identification determines how many elements the work is to contain. These different identifications are incompatible with one another, or generally so, and each might be said to make a different artwork, even though each artwork contains the identical real object as part of itself – or at least parts of the identical real object as parts of itself. There are, of course, senseless identifications: no one could, I think, sensibly read the middle horizontal as *Love's Labour's Lost* or *The Ascendancy of St. Erasmus*. Finally, notice how acceptance of

one identification rather than another is in effect to exchange one *world* for another. We could, indeed, enter a quiet poetic world by identifying the upper area with a clear and cloudless sky, reflected in the still surface of the water below, whiteness kept from whiteness only by the unreal boundary of the horizon.

And now Testadura, having hovered in the wings throughout this discussion, protests that *all he sees is paint*: a white painted oblong with a black line painted across it. And how right he really is: that is all he sees or that anybody can, we aesthetes included. So, if he asks us to show him what there is further to see, to demonstrate through pointing that this is an artwork (*Sea and Sky*), we cannot comply, for he has overlooked nothing (and it would be absurd to suppose he had, that there was something tiny we could point to and he, peering closely, say "So it is! A work of art after all!"). We cannot help him until he has mastered the *is of artistic identification* and so *constitutes* it a work of art. If he cannot achieve this, he will never look upon artworks: he will be like a child who sees sticks as sticks.

But what about pure abstractions, say something that looks just like *A* but is entitled No. 7? The 10th Street abstractionist blankly insists that there is nothing here but white paint and black, and none of our literary identifications need apply. What then distinguishes him from Testadura, whose philistine utterances are indiscernible from his? And how can it be an artwork for him and not for Testadura, when they agree that there is nothing that does not meet the eye? The answer, unpopular as it is likely to be to purists of every variety, lies in the fact that this artist has returned to the physicality of paint through an atmosphere compounded of artistic theories and the history of recent and remote painting, elements of which he is trying to refine out of his own work; and as a consequence of this his work belongs in this atmosphere and is part of this history. He has achieved abstraction through rejection of artistic identifications, returning to the real world from which such identifications remove us (he thinks), somewhat in the mode of Ch'ing Yuan, who wrote:

Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I

came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains, and waters are not waters. But now that I have got the very substance I am at rest. For it is just that I see mountains once again as mountains, and waters once again as waters.

His identification of what he has made is logically dependent upon the theories and history he rejects. The difference between his utterance and Testadura's "This is black paint and white paint and nothing more" lies in the fact that he is still using the *is* of artistic identification, so that his use of "That black paint is black paint" is not a tautology. Testadura is not at that stage. To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.

III

Mr. Andy Warhol, the Pop artist, displays facsimiles of Brillo cartons, piled high, in neat stacks, as in the stockroom of the supermarket. They happen to be of wood, painted to look like cardboard, and why not? To paraphrase the critic of the *Times*, if one may make the facsimile of a human being out of bronze, why not the facsimile of a Brillo carton out of plywood? The cost of these boxes happens to be 2×10^3 that of their homely counterparts in real life – a differential hardly ascribable to their advantage in durability. In fact the Brillo people might, at some slight increase in cost, make their boxes out of plywood without these becoming artworks, and Warhol might make *his* out of cardboard without their ceasing to be art. So we may forget questions of intrinsic value, and ask why the Brillo people cannot manufacture art and why Warhol cannot *but* make artworks. Well, his are made by hand, to be sure. Which is like an insane reversal of Picasso's strategy in pasting the label from a bottle of Suze onto a drawing, saying as it were that the academic artist, concerned with exact imitation, must always fall short of the real thing: so why not just *use* the real thing? The Pop artist laboriously reproduces machine-made objects by hand, e.g., painting the labels on coffee cans (one can hear the familiar commendation "Entirely made by hand" falling painfully out of the guide's

vocabulary when confronted by these objects). But the difference cannot consist in craft: a man who carved pebbles out of stones and carefully constructed a work called *Gravel Pile* might invoke the labor theory of value to account for the price he demands; but the question is, What makes it art? And why need Warhol *make* these things anyway? Why not just scrawl his signature across one? Or crush one up and display it as *Crushed Brillo Box* ("A protest against mechanization . . .") or simply display a Brillo carton as *Uncrushed Brillo Box* ("A bold affirmation of the plastic authenticity of industrial . . .")? Is this man a kind of Midas, turning whatever he touches into the gold of pure art? And the whole world consisting of latent artworks waiting, like the bread and wine of reality, to be transfigured, through some dark mystery, into the indiscernible flesh and blood of the sacrament? Never mind that the Brillo box may not be good, much less great art. The impressive thing is that it is art at all. But if it is, why are not the indiscernible Brillo boxes that are in the stockroom? Or *has* the whole distinction between art and reality broken down?

Suppose a man collects objects (ready-mades), including a Brillo carton; we praise the exhibit for variety, ingenuity, what you will. Next he exhibits nothing but Brillo cartons, and we criticize it as dull, repetitive, self-plagiarizing – or (more profoundly) claim that he is obsessed by regularity and repetition, as in *Marienbad*. Or he piles them high, leaving a narrow path; we tread our way through the smooth opaque stacks and find it an unsettling experience, and write it up as the closing in of consumer products, confining us as prisoners: or we say he is a modern pyramid builder. True, we don't say these things about the stockboy. But then a stockroom is not an art gallery, and we cannot readily separate the Brillo cartons from the gallery they are in, any more than we can separate the Rauschenberg bed from the paint upon it. Outside the gallery, they are pasteboard cartons. But then, scoured clean of paint, Rauschenberg's bed is a bed, just what it was before it was transformed into art. But then if we think this matter through, we discover that the artist has failed, really and of necessity, to produce a mere real object. He has produced an artwork, his use of real Brillo cartons being but an expansion of the resources available to artists,

a contribution to *artists' materials*, as oil paint was, or *tuche*.

What in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo Box is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is (in a sense of *is* other than that of artistic identification). Of course, without the theory, one is unlikely to see it as art, and in order to see it as part of the artworld, one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory as well as a considerable amount of the history of recent New York painting. It could not have been art fifty years ago. But then there could not have been, everything being equal, flight insurance in the Middle Ages, or Etruscan typewriter erasers. The world has to be ready for certain things, the artworld no less than the real one. It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible. It would, I should think, never have occurred to the painters of Lascaux that they were producing *art* on those walls. Not unless there were neolithic aestheticians.

IV

The artworld stands to the real world in something like the relationship in which the City of God stands to the Earthly City. Certain objects, like certain individuals, enjoy a double citizenship, but there remains, the RT notwithstanding, a fundamental contrast between artworks and real objects. Perhaps this was already dimly sensed by the early framers of the IT who, inchoately realizing the nonreality of art, were perhaps limited only in supposing that the sole way objects had of being other than real is to be sham, so that artworks necessarily had to be imitations of real objects. This was too narrow. So Yeats saw in writing "Once out of nature I shall never take / My bodily form from any natural thing." It is but a matter of choice: and the Brillo box of the artworld may be just the Brillo box of the real one, separated and united by the *is* of artistic identification. But I should like to say some final words about the theories that make artworks possible, and their relationship to one another. In so doing, I shall beg some of the hardest philosophical questions I know.

I shall now think of pairs of predicates related to each other as "opposites," conceding straight off the vagueness of this *démodé* term. Contradictory predicates are not opposites, since one of each of them must apply to every object in the universe, and neither of a pair of opposites need apply to some objects in the universe. An object must first be of a certain kind before either of a pair of opposites applies to it, and then at most and at least one of the opposites must apply to it. So opposites are not contraries, for contraries may both be false of some objects in the universe, but opposites cannot both be false; for of some objects, neither of a pair of opposites *sensibly* applies, unless the object is of the right sort. Then, if the object is of the required kind, the opposites behave as contradictories. If F and non- F are opposites, an object o must be of a certain kind K before either of these sensibly applies; but if o is a member of K , then o either is F or non- F , to the exclusion of the other. The class of pairs of opposites that sensibly apply to the $(\delta)Ko$ I shall designate as the class of *K-relevant predicates*. And a necessary condition for an object to be of a kind K is that at least one pair of K -relevant opposites be sensibly applicable to it. But, in fact, if an object is of kind K , at least and at most one of each K -relevant pair of opposites applies to it.

I am now interested in the K -relevant predicates for the class K of artworks. And let F and non- F be an opposite pair of such predicates. Now it might happen that, throughout an entire period of time, every artwork is non- F . But since nothing thus far is both an artwork and F , it might never occur to anyone that non- F is an artistically relevant predicate. The non- F -ness of artworks goes unmarked. By contrast, all works up to a given time might be G , it never occurring to anyone until that time that something might both be an artwork and non- G ; indeed, it might have been thought that G was a *defining trait* of artworks when in fact something might first have to be an artwork before G is sensibly predicable of it – in which case non- G might also be predicable of artworks, and G itself then could not have been a defining trait of this class.

Let G be 'is representational' and let F be 'is expressionist'. At a given time, these and their opposites are perhaps the only art-relevant predicates in critical use. Now letting '+' stand for a

given predicate P and '-' for its opposite non- P , we may construct a style matrix more or less as follows:

F	G
+	+
+	–
–	+
–	–

The rows determine available styles, given the active critical vocabulary: representational expressionistic (e.g., Fauvism); representational nonexpressionistic (Ingres); nonrepresentational expressionistic (Abstract Expressionism); nonrepresentational nonexpressionist (hard-edge abstraction). Plainly, as we add art-relevant predicates, we increase the number of available styles at the rate of 2^n . It is, of course, not easy to see in advance which predicates are going to be added or replaced by their opposites, but suppose an artist determines that H shall henceforth be artistically relevant for his paintings. Then, in fact, both H and non- H become artistically relevant for *all* painting, and if his is the first and only painting that is H , every other painting in existence becomes non- H , and the entire community of paintings is enriched, together with a doubling of the available style opportunities. It is this retroactive enrichment of the entities in the artworld that makes it possible to discuss Raphael and De Kooning together, or Lichtenstein and Michelangelo. The greater the variety of artistically relevant predicates, the more complex the individual members of the artworld become; and the more one knows of the entire population of the artworld, the richer one's experience with any of its members.

In this regard, notice that, if there are m artistically relevant predicates, there is always a bottom row with m minuses. This row is apt to be occupied by purists. Having scoured their canvasses clear of what they regard as inessential, they credit themselves with having distilled out the essence of art. But this is just their fallacy: exactly as many artistically relevant predicates stand true of their square monochromes as stand true of any member of the Artworld, and they can *exist* as artworks only insofar as "impure" paintings exist. Strictly speaking, a black square by Reinhardt is artistically as rich as Titian's

Sacred and Profane Love. This explains how less is more.

Fashion, as it happens, favors certain rows of the style matrix: museums, connoisseurs, and others are makeweights in the Artworld. To insist, or seek to, that all artists become representational, perhaps to gain entry into a specially prestigious exhibition, cuts the available style matrix in half: there are then $2^{n/2}$ ways of satisfying the requirement, and museums then can exhibit all these “approaches” to the topic they have set. But this is a matter of almost purely sociological interest: one row in the matrix is as legitimate as another. An artistic breakthrough consists, I suppose, in adding the possibility of a column to the matrix. Artists then, with greater or less alacrity, occupy the positions thus opened up: this is a remarkable feature of contemporary art, and

for those unfamiliar with the matrix, it is hard, and perhaps impossible, to recognize certain positions as occupied by artworks. Nor would these things be artworks without the theories and the histories of the Artworld.

Brillo boxes enter the artworld with that same tonic incongruity the *commedia dell'arte* characters bring into *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Whatever is the artistically relevant predicate in virtue of which they gain their entry, the rest of the Artworld becomes that much the richer in having the opposite predicate available and applicable to its members. And, to return to the views of Hamlet with which we began this discussion, Brillo boxes may reveal us to ourselves as well as anything might: as a mirror held up to nature, they might serve to catch the conscience of our kings.

What is Art? An Institutional Analysis

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The attempt to define “art” by specifying its necessary and sufficient conditions is an old endeavor. The first definition – the imitation theory – despite what now seem like obvious difficulties, more or less satisfied everyone until some time in the nineteenth century. After the expression theory of art broke the domination of the imitation theory, many definitions purporting to reveal the necessary and sufficient conditions of art appeared. In the mid-1950s, several philosophers, inspired by Wittgenstein’s talk about concepts, began arguing that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for art. Until recently, this argument had persuaded so many philosophers of the futility of trying to define art that the flow of definitions had all but ceased. Although I will ultimately try to show that “art” can be defined, the denial of that possibility has had the very great value of forcing us to look deeper into the concept of “art.” The parade of dreary and superficial definitions that had been presented was, for a variety of reasons, eminently rejectable. The traditional attempts to define “art,” from the imitation theory on, may be thought of as Phase I and the contention that “art” cannot be defined

as Phase II. I want to supply Phase III by defining “art” in such a way as to avoid the difficulties of the traditional definitions and to incorporate the insights of the later analysis. I should note that the imitation theory of the fine arts seems to have been adopted by those who held it without much serious thought and perhaps cannot be considered as a self-conscious theory of art in the way that the later theories can be.

The traditional attempts at definition have sometimes failed to see beyond prominent but accidental features of works of art, features that have characterized art at a particular stage in its historical development. For example, until quite recently the works of art clearly recognizable as such were either obviously representational or assumed to be representational. Paintings and sculptures were obviously so, and music was widely assumed in some sense also to be representational. Literature was representational in that it described familiar scenes of life. It was, then, easy enough to think that imitation must be the essence of art. The imitation theory focused on a readily evident relational property of works of art, namely, art’s relation to subject matter. The development of nonobjective art showed that imitation is not even an always-accompanying property of art, much less an essential one.

The theory of art as the expression of emotion has focused on another relational property of

works of art, the relation of a work to its creator. The expression theory also has proved inadequate, and no other subsequent definition has been satisfactory. Although not fully satisfying as definitions, the imitation and expression theories do provide a clue: both singled out *relational* properties of art as essential. As I shall try to show, the two defining characteristics of art are indeed relational properties, and one of them turns out to be exceedingly complex.

I

The best-known denial that "art" can be defined occurs in Morris Weitz's article "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics."¹ Weitz's conclusion depends upon two arguments which may be called his "generalization argument" and his "classification argument." In stating the "generalization argument" Weitz distinguishes, quite correctly, between the generic conception of "art" and the various subconcepts of art such as tragedy, the novel, painting, and the like. He then goes on to give an argument purporting to show that the subconcept "novel" is open, that is, that the members of the class of novels do not share any essential or defining characteristics. He then asserts without further argument that what is true of novels is true of all other subconcepts of art. The generalization from one subconcept to all subconcepts may or may not be justified, but I am not questioning it here. I do question, however, Weitz's additional contention, also asserted without argument, that the generic conception of "art" is open. The best that can be said of his conclusion about the generic sense is that it is unsupported. All or some of the subconcepts of art may be open and the generic conception of art still be closed. That is, it is possible that all or some of the subconcepts of art, such as novel, tragedy, sculpture, and painting, may lack necessary and sufficient conditions and at the same time that "work of art," which is the genus of all the subconcepts, can be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Tragedies may not have any characteristics in common which would distinguish them from, say, comedies *within the domain of art*, but it may be that there are common characteristics that works of art have which distinguish them from nonart.

Nothing prevents a "closed genus/open species" relationship. Weitz himself has recently cited what he takes to be a similar (although reversed) example of genus-species relationship. He argues that "game" (the genus) is open but that "major league baseball" (a species) is closed.²

His second argument, "the classification argument," claims to show that not even the characteristic of artifactuality is a necessary feature of art. Weitz's conclusion here is something of a surprise, because it has been widely assumed by philosophers and nonphilosophers alike that a work of art is necessarily an artifact. His argument is simply that we sometimes utter such statements as "This piece of driftwood is a lovely piece of sculpture," and since such utterances are perfectly intelligible, it follows that some nonartifacts such as certain pieces of driftwood are works of art (sculptures). In other words, something need not be an artifact in order to be correctly classified as a work of art. I will try to rebut this argument shortly.

Recently, Maurice Mandelbaum has raised a question about Wittgenstein's famous contention that "game" cannot be defined and Weitz's thesis about "art."³ His challenge to both is based on the charge that they have been concerned only with what Mandelbaum calls "exhibited" characteristics and that consequently each has failed to take account of the nonexhibited, relational aspects of games and art. By "exhibited" characteristics Mandelbaum means easily perceived properties such as the fact that a ball is used in a certain kind of game, that a painting has a triangular composition, that an area in a painting is red, or that the plot of a tragedy contains a reversal of fortune. Mandelbaum concludes that when we consider the nonexhibited properties of games, we see that they have in common "the potentiality of . . . [an] . . . absorbing non-practical interest to either participants or spectators."⁴ Mandelbaum may or may not be right about "game," but what interests me is the application of his suggestion about nonexhibited properties to the discussion of the definition of art. Although he does not attempt a definition of "art," Mandelbaum does suggest that feature(s) common to all works of art may perhaps be discovered that will be a basis for the definition of "art," if the nonexhibited features of art are attended to.

Having noted Mandelbaum's invaluable suggestion about definition, I now return to Weitz's argument concerning artifactuality. In an earlier attempt to show Weitz wrong, I thought it sufficient to point out that there are two senses of "work of art," an evaluative sense and a classificatory one; Weitz himself distinguishes these in his article as the evaluative and the descriptive senses of art. My earlier argument was that if there is more than one sense of "work of art," then the fact that "This piece of driftwood is a lovely piece of sculpture" is intelligible does not prove what Weitz wants it to prove. Weitz would have to show that "sculpture" is being used in the sentence in question in the classificatory sense, and this he makes no attempt to do. My argument assumed that once the distinction is made, it is obvious that "sculpture" is here being used in the evaluative sense. Richard Sclafani has subsequently noted that my argument shows only that Weitz's argument is inconclusive and that Weitz might still be right, even though his argument does not prove his conclusion. Sclafani, however, has constructed a stronger argument against Weitz on this point.⁵

Sclafani shows that there is a third sense of "work of art" and that "driftwood cases" (the nonartifact cases) fall under it. He begins by comparing a paradigm work of art, Brancusi's *Bird in Space*, with a piece of driftwood which looks very much like it. Sclafani says that it seems natural to say of the piece of driftwood that it is a work of art and that we do so because it has so many properties in common with the Brancusi piece. He then asks us to reflect on our characterization of the driftwood and the *direction* it has taken. We say the driftwood is art because of its resemblance to some paradigm work of art or because the driftwood shares properties with several paradigm works of art. The paradigm work or works are of course always artifacts; the direction of our move is from paradigmatic (artifactual) works of art to nonartifactual "art." Sclafani quite correctly takes this to indicate that there is a primary, paradigmatic sense of "work of art" (my classificatory sense) and a derivative or secondary sense into which the "driftwood cases" fall. Weitz is right in a way in saying that the driftwood is art, but wrong in concluding that artifactuality is unnecessary for (the primary sense of) art.

There are then at least three distinct senses of "work of art": the primary or classificatory sense, the secondary or derivative, and the evaluative. Perhaps in most uses of Weitz's driftwood sentence example, both the derivative and the evaluative senses would be involved: the derivative sense if the driftwood shared a number of properties with some paradigm work of art and the evaluative sense if the shared properties were found to be valuable by the speaker. Sclafani gives a case in which only the evaluative sense functions, when someone says, "Sally's cake is a work of art." In most uses of such a sentence "work of art" would simply mean that its referent has valuable qualities. Admittedly, one can imagine contexts in which the derivative sense would apply to cakes. (Given the situation in art today, one can easily imagine cakes to which the primary sense of art could be applied.) If, however, someone were to say, "This Rembrandt is a work of art," both the classificatory and the evaluative senses would be functioning. The expression "this Rembrandt" would convey the information that its referent is a work of art in the classificatory sense, and "is a work of art" could then only reasonably be understood in the evaluative sense. Finally, someone might say of a sea shell or other natural object which resembles a man's face but is otherwise uninteresting, "This shell (or other natural object) is a work of art." In this case, only the derivative sense would be used.

We utter sentences in which the expression "work of art" has the evaluative sense with considerable frequency, applying it to both natural objects and artifacts. We speak of works of art in the derived sense with somewhat less frequency. The classificatory sense of "work of art," which indicates simply that a thing belongs to a certain category of artifacts, occurs, however, very infrequently in our discourse. We rarely utter sentences in which we use the classificatory sense, because it is such a basic notion: we generally know immediately whether an object is a work of art, so that generally no one needs to say, by way of classification, "That is a work of art," although recent developments in art such as junk sculpture and found art may occasionally force such remarks. Even if we do not often talk about art in this classificatory sense, however, it is a basic concept that structures and guides our thinking about our world and its contents.

II

It is now clear that artifactuality is a necessary condition (call it the genus) of the primary sense of art. This fact, however, does not seem very surprising and would not even be very interesting except that Weitz and others have denied it. Artifactuality alone, however, is not the whole story and another necessary condition (the differentia) has to be specified in order to have a satisfactory definition of "art." Like artifactuality, the second condition is a nonexhibited property, which turns out to be as complicated as artifactuality is simple. The attempt to discover and specify the second condition of art will involve an examination of the intricate complexities of the "artworld." W. E. Kennick, defending a view similar to Weitz's, contends that the kind of approach to be employed here, following Mandelbaum's lead, is futile. He concludes that "the attempt to define Art in terms of what we do with certain objects is as doomed as any other."⁶ He tries to support this conclusion by referring to such things as the fact that the ancient Egyptians sealed up paintings and sculptures in tombs. There are two difficulties with Kennick's argument. First, that the Egyptians sealed up paintings and sculptures in tombs does not show that they regarded them differently from the way in which we regard them. They might have put them there for the dead to appreciate or simply because they belonged to the dead person. The Egyptian practice does not establish so radical a difference between their conception of art and ours that a definition subsuming both is impossible. Second, one need not assume that we and the ancient Egyptians share a common conception of art. It would be enough to be able to specify the necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept of art which we have (we present-day Americans, we present-day Westerners, we Westerners since the organization of the system of the arts in or about the eighteenth century – I am not sure of the exact limits of the "we"). Kennick notwithstanding, we are most likely to discover the differentia of art by considering "what we do with certain objects." Of course, no thing guarantees that any given thing we might do or an ancient Egyptian might have done with a work of art will throw light on the concept of art. Not every "doing" will reveal what is required.

Although he does not attempt to formulate a definition, Arthur Danto in his provocative article, "The Artworld," has suggested the direction that must be taken by an attempt to define "art."⁷ In reflecting on art and its history together with such present-day developments as Warhol's *Brillo Carton* and Rauschenberg's *Bed*, Danto writes, "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of history of art: an artworld."⁸ Admittedly, this stimulating comment is in need of elucidation, but it is clear that in speaking of "something the eye cannot descry" Danto is agreeing with Mandelbaum that nonexhibited properties are of great importance in constituting something as art. In speaking of atmosphere and history, however, Danto's remark carries us a step further than Mandelbaum's analysis. Danto points to the rich structure in which particular works of art are embedded: he indicates *the institutional nature of art*.⁹

I shall use Danto's term "artworld" to refer to the broad social institution in which works of art have their place.¹⁰ But is there such an institution? George Bernard Shaw speaks somewhere of the apostolic line of succession stretching from Aeschylus to himself. Shaw was no doubt speaking for effect and to draw attention to himself, as he often did, but there is an important truth implied by his remark. There is a long tradition or continuing institution of the theater having its origins in ancient Greek religion and other Greek institutions. That tradition has run very thin at times and perhaps even ceased to exist altogether during some periods, only to be reborn out of its memory and the need for art. The institutions associated with the theater have varied from time to time: in the beginning it was Greek religion and the Greek state; in medieval times, the church; more recently, private business and the state (national theater). What has remained constant with its own identity throughout its history is the theater itself as an established way of doing and behaving, what I shall call in Chapter 7 the primary convention of the theater. This institutionalized behavior occurs on both sides of the "footlights": both the players and the audience are involved and go to make up the institution of the theater. The roles of the actors and the audience are defined by the traditions of the theater.

What the author, management, and players present is art, and it is art because it is presented within the theater-world framework. Plays are written to have a place in the theater system and they exist as plays, that is, as art, within that system. Of course, I do not wish to deny that plays also exist as literary works, that is, as art within the literary system: the theater system and the literary system overlap. Let me make clear what I mean by speaking of the artworld as an institution. Among the meanings of "institution" in *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* are the following: "3. That which is instituted as: a. An established practice, law, custom, etc. b. An established society or corporation." When I call the artworld an institution I am saying that it is an established practice. Some persons have thought that an institution must be an established society or corporation and, consequently, have misunderstood my claim about the artworld.

Theater is only one of the systems within the artworld. Each of the systems has had its own origins and historical development. We have some information about the later stages of these developments, but we have to guess about the origins of the basic art systems. I suppose that we have complete knowledge of certain recently developed subsystems or genres such as Dada and happenings. Even if our knowledge is not as complete as we wish it were, however, we do have substantial information about the systems of the artworld as they currently exist and as they have existed for some time. One central feature all of the systems have in common is that each is a framework for the *presenting* of particular works of art. Given the great variety of the systems of the artworld it is not surprising that works of art have no exhibited properties in common. If, however, we step back and view the works in their institutional setting, we will be able to see the essential properties they share.

Theater is a rich and instructive illustration of the institutional nature of art. But it is a development within the domain of painting and sculpture – Dadaism – that most easily reveals the institutional essence of art. Duchamp and friends conferred the status of art on "ready-mades" (urinals, hatracks, snow shovels, and the like), and when we reflect on their deeds we can take note of a kind of human action which has until

now gone unnoticed and unappreciated – the action of conferring the status of art. Painters and sculptors, of course, have been engaging all along in the action of conferring this status on the objects they create. As long, however, as the created objects were conventional, given the paradigms of the times, the objects themselves and their fascinating exhibited properties were the focus of the attention of not only spectators and critics but of philosophers of art as well. When an artist of an earlier era painted a picture, he did some or all of a number of things: depicted a human being, portrayed a certain man, fulfilled a commission, worked at his livelihood, and so on. In addition he also acted as an agent of the artworld and conferred the status of art on his creation. Philosophers of art attended to only some of the properties the created object acquired from these various actions, for example, to the representational or to the expressive features of the objects. They entirely ignored the nonexhibited property of status. When however, the objects are bizarre, as those of the Dadaists are, our attention is forced away from the objects' obvious properties to a consideration of the objects in their social context. As works of art Duchamp's "ready-mades" may not be worth much, but as examples of art they are very valuable for art theory. I am not claiming that Duchamp and friends invented the conferring of the status of art; they simply used an existing institutional device in an unusual way. Duchamp did not invent the artworld, because it was there all along.

The artworld consists of a bundle of systems: theater, painting, sculpture, literature, music, and so on, each of which furnishes an institutional background for the conferring of the status on objects within its domain. No limit can be placed on the number of systems that can be brought under the generic conception of art, and each of the major systems contains further subsystems. These features of the artworld provide the elasticity whereby creativity of even the most radical sort can be accommodated. A whole new system comparable to the theater, for example, could be added in one fell swoop. What is more likely is that a new subsystem would be added within a system. For example, junk sculpture added within sculpture, happenings added within theater. Such additions might in time develop

into full-blown systems. Thus, the radical creativity, adventuresomeness, and exuberance of art of which Weitz speaks is possible within the concept of art, even though it is closed by the necessary and sufficient conditions of artifactuality and conferred status.

Having now briefly described the artworld, I am in a position to specify a definition of "work of art." The definition will be given in terms of artifactuality and the conferred status of art or, more strictly speaking, the conferred status of candidate for appreciation. Once the definition has been stated, a great deal will still remain to be said by way of clarification: A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).

The second condition of the definition makes use of four variously interconnected notions: (1) acting on behalf of an institution, (2) conferring of status, (3) being a candidate, and (4) appreciation. The first two of these are so closely related that they must be discussed together. I shall first describe paradigm cases of conferring status outside the artworld and then show how similar actions take place within the artworld. The most clear-cut examples of the conferring of status are certain legal actions of the state. A king's conferring of knighthood, a grand jury's indicting someone, the chairman of the election board certifying that someone is qualified to run for office, or a minister's pronouncing a couple man and wife are examples in which a person or persons acting on behalf of a social institution (the state) confer(s) *legal* status on persons. The congress or a legally constituted commission may confer the status of national park or monument on an area or thing. The examples given suggest that pomp and ceremony are required to establish legal status, but this is not so, although of course a legal system is presupposed. For example, in some jurisdictions common-law marriage is possible – a legal status acquired without ceremony. The conferring of a PhD degree on someone by a university, the election of someone as president of the Rotary, and the declaring of an object as a relic of the church are examples in which a person or persons confer(s) nonlegal status on persons or things. In such cases some social system or

other must exist as the framework within which the conferring takes place, but, as before, ceremony is not required to establish status: for example, a person can acquire the status of wise man or village idiot within a community without ceremony.

Some may feel that the notion of conferring status within the artworld is excessively vague. Certainly this notion is not as clear-cut as the conferring of status within the legal system, where procedures and lines of authority are explicitly defined and incorporated into law. The counterparts in the artworld to specified procedures and lines of authority are nowhere codified, and the artworld carries on its business at the level of customary practice. Still there *is* a practice and this defines a social institution. A social institution need not have a formally established constitution, officers, and bylaws in order to exist and have the capacity to confer status – some social institutions are formal and some are informal. The artworld could become formalized, and perhaps has been to some extent in certain political contexts, but most people who are interested in art would probably consider this a bad thing. Such formality would threaten the freshness and exuberance of art. The core personnel of the artworld is a loosely organized, but nevertheless related, set of persons including artists (understood to refer to painters, writers, composers), producers, museum directors, museum-goers, theater-goers, reporters for newspapers, critics for publications of all sorts, art historians, art theorists, philosophers of art, and others. These are the people who keep the machinery of the artworld working and thereby provide for its continuing existence. In addition, every person who sees himself as a member of the artworld is thereby a member. Although I have called the persons just listed the core personnel of the artworld, there is a minimum core within that core without which the artworld would not exist. This essential core consists of artists who create the works, "presenters" to present the works, and "goers" who appreciate the works. This minimum core might be called "the presentation group," for it consists of artists whose activity is necessary if anything is to be presented, the presenters (actors, stage managers, and so on), and the goers whose presence and cooperation is necessary in order for anything to be presented. A given

person might play more than one of these essential roles in the case of the presentation of a particular work. Critics, historians, and philosophers of art become members of the artworld at some time after the minimum core personnel of a particular art system get that system into operation. All of these roles are institutionalized and must be learned in one way or another by the participants. For example, a theater-goer is not just someone who happens to enter a theater; he is a person who enters with certain expectations and knowledge about what he will experience and an understanding of how he should behave in the face of what he will experience.

Assuming that the existence of the artworld has been established or at least made plausible, the problem is now to see how status is conferred by this institution. My thesis is that, in a way analogous to the way in which a person is certified as qualified for office, or two persons acquire the status of common-law marriage within a legal system, or a person is elected president of the Rotary, or a person acquires the status of wise man within a community, so an artifact can acquire the status of candidate for appreciation within the social system called "the artworld." How can one tell when the status has been conferred? An artifact's hanging in an art museum as part of a show and a performance at a theater are sure signs. There is, of course, no guarantee that one can always know whether something is a candidate for appreciation, just as one cannot always tell whether a given person is a knight or is married. When an object's status depends upon nonexhibited characteristics, a simple look at the object will not necessarily reveal that status. The nonexhibited relation *may* be symbolized by some badge, for example, by a wedding ring, in which case a simple look will reveal the status.

The more important question is that of how the status of candidate for appreciation is conferred. The examples just mentioned, display in a museum and a performance in a theater, seem to suggest that a number of persons are required for the actual conferring of the status. In one sense a number of persons are required but in another sense only one person is required: a number of persons are required to make up the social institution of the artworld, but only one person is required to act on behalf of the artworld and to confer the status of candidate for appre-

ciation. In fact, many works of art are seen only by one person – the one who creates them – but they are still art. The status in question may be acquired by a single person's acting on behalf of the artworld and *treating an artifact as a candidate for appreciation*. Of course, nothing prevents a group of persons from conferring the status, but it is usually conferred by a single person, the artist who creates the artifact. It may be helpful to compare and contrast the notion of conferring the status of candidate for appreciation with a case in which something is simply presented for appreciation: hopefully this will throw light on the notion of status of candidate. Consider the case of a salesman of plumbing supplies who spreads his wares before us. "Placing before" and "conferring the status of candidate for appreciation" are very different notions, and this difference can be brought out by comparing the salesman's action with the superficially similar act of Duchamp in entering a urinal which he christened *Fountain* in that now-famous art show. The difference is that Duchamp's action took place within the institutional setting of the artworld and the plumbing salesman's action took place outside of it. The salesman could do what Duchamp did, that is, convert a urinal into a work of art, but such a thing probably would not occur to him. Please remember that *Fountain's* being a work of art does not mean that it is a good one, nor does this qualification insinuate that it is a bad one either. The antics of a particular present-day artist serve to reinforce the point of the Duchamp case and also to emphasize a significance of the practice of naming works of art. Walter de Maria has in the case of one of his works even gone through the motions, no doubt as a burlesque, of using a procedure used by many legal and some nonlegal institutions – the procedure of licensing. His *High Energy Bar* (a stainless-steel bar) is accompanied by a certificate bearing the name of the work and stating that the bar is a work of art only when the certificate is present. In addition to highlighting the status of art by "certifying" it on a document, this example serves to suggest a significance of the act of naming works of art. An object may acquire the status of art without ever being named but giving it a title makes clear to whomever is interested that an object is a work of art. Specific titles function in a variety of ways – as aids to

understanding a work or as a convenient way of identifying it, for example – but any title at all (even *Untitled*) is a badge of status.¹¹

The third notion involved in the second condition of the definition is candidacy: a member of the artworld confers the status of candidate for appreciation. The definition does not require that a work of art actually be appreciated, even by one person. The fact is that many, perhaps most, works of art go unappreciated. It is important not to build into the definition of the classificatory sense of “work of art” value properties such as actual appreciation: to do so would make it impossible to speak of unappreciated works of art. Building in value properties might even make it awkward to speak of bad works of art. A theory of art must preserve certain central features of the way in which we talk about art, and we do find it necessary sometimes to speak of unappreciated art and of bad art. Also, not every aspect of a work is included in the candidacy for appreciation; for example, the color of the back of a painting is not ordinarily considered to be something which someone might think it appropriate to appreciate. The problem of which aspects of a work of art are to be included within the candidacy for appreciation is a question I shall pursue later in Chapter 7 in trying to give an analysis of the notion of aesthetic object. The definition of “work of art” should not, therefore, be understood as asserting that every aspect of a work is included within the candidacy for appreciation.

The fourth notion involved in the second condition of the definition is appreciation itself. Some may assume that the definition is referring to a special kind of *aesthetic* appreciation. I shall argue later in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 that there is no reason to think that there is a special kind of aesthetic consciousness, attention, or perception. Similarly, I do not think there is any reason to think that there is a special kind of aesthetic appreciation. All that is meant by “appreciation” in the definition is something like “in experiencing the qualities of a thing one finds them worthy or valuable,” and this meaning applies quite generally both inside and outside the domain of art. Several persons have felt that my account of the institutional theory of art is incomplete because of what they see as my insufficient analysis of “appreciation.” They have, I believe, thought that

there are different kinds of appreciation and that the appreciation in the appreciation of art is somehow typically different from the appreciation in the appreciation of nonart. But the only sense in which there is a difference between the appreciation of art and the appreciation of nonart is that the appreciations have different *objects*. The institutional structure in which the art object is embedded, not different kinds of appreciation, makes the difference between the appreciation of art and the appreciation of nonart.

In a recent article¹² Ted Cohen has raised a question concerning (1) candidacy for appreciation and (2) appreciation as these two were treated in my original attempt to define “art.”¹³ He claims that in order for it to be possible for candidacy for appreciation to be conferred on something it must be possible for that thing to be appreciated. Perhaps he is right about this; in any event, I cannot think of any reason to disagree with him on this point. The possibility of appreciation is one constraint on the definition: if something cannot be appreciated, it cannot become art. The question that now arises is: is there anything which it is impossible to appreciate? Cohen claims many things cannot be appreciated; for example, “ordinary thumbtacks, cheap white envelopes, the plastic forks given at some drive-in restaurants.”¹⁴ But more importantly, he claims that *Fountain* cannot be appreciated. He says that *Fountain* has a point which can be appreciated, but that it is Duchamp’s gesture that has significance (can be appreciated) and not *Fountain* itself. I agree that *Fountain* has the significance Cohen attributes to it, namely, that it was a protest against the art of its day. But why cannot the ordinary qualities of *Fountain* – its gleaming white surface, the depth revealed when it reflects images of surrounding objects, its pleasing oval shape – be appreciated. It has qualities similar to those of works by Brancusi and Moore which many do not balk at saying they appreciate. Similarly, thumbtacks, envelopes, and plastic forks have qualities that can be appreciated if one makes the effort to focus attention on them. One of the values of photography is its ability to focus on and bring out the qualities of quite ordinary objects. And the same sort of thing can be done without the benefit of photography by just looking. In short, it seems unlikely to me that any object would not have some quality which is

appreciable and thus likely that the constraint Cohen suggests may well be vacuous. But even if there are some objects that cannot be appreciated, *Fountain* and the other Dadaist creations are not among them.

I should note that in accepting Cohen's claim I am saying that every work of art must have some minimal *potential* value or worthiness. This fact, however, does not collapse the distinction between the evaluative sense and the classificatory sense of "work of art." The evaluative sense is used when the object it is predicated of is deemed *to be* of substantial, actual value, and that object may be a natural object. I will further note that the appreciability of a work of art in the classificatory sense is *potential* value which in a given case may never be realized.¹⁵

The definition I have given contains a reference to the artworld. Consequently, some may have the uncomfortable feeling that my definition is viciously circular. Admittedly, in a sense the definition is circular, but it is not viciously so. If I had said something like "A work of art is an artifact on which a status has been conferred by the artworld" and then said of the artworld only that it confers the status of candidacy for appreciation, then the definition would be viciously circular because the circle would be so small and *uninformative*. I have, however, devoted a considerable amount of space in this chapter to describing and analyzing the historical, organizational, and functional intricacies of the artworld, and if this account is accurate the reader has received a considerable amount of *information* about the artworld. The circle I have run is not small and it is not uninformative. If, in the end, the artworld cannot be described independently of art, that is, if the description contains references to art historians, art reporters, plays, theaters, and so on, then the definition strictly speaking is circular. It is not, however, viciously so, because the whole account in which the definition is embedded contains a great deal of information about the artworld. One must not focus narrowly on the definition alone: for what is important to see is that art is an institutional concept and this requires seeing the definition in the context of the whole account. I suspect that the "problem" of circularity will arise frequently, perhaps always, when institutional concepts are dealt with.

III

The instances of Dadaist art and similar present-day developments which have served to bring the institutional nature of art to our attention suggest several questions. First, if Duchamp can convert such artifacts as a urinal, a snow shovel, and a hatrack into works of art, why can't natural objects such as driftwood also become works of art in the classificatory sense? Perhaps they can if any one of a number of things is done to them. One way in which this might happen would be for someone to pick up a natural object, take it home, and hang it on the wall. Another way would be to pick up a natural object and enter it in an exhibition. I was assuming earlier, by the way, that the piece of driftwood referred to in Weitz's sentence was in place on a beach and untouched by human hand or at least untouched by any human intention and therefore was art in the evaluative or derivative sense. Natural objects which become works of art in the classificatory sense are artifactualized without the use of tools – artifactuality is conferred on the object rather than worked on it. This means that natural objects which become works of art acquire their artifactuality at the same time that the status of candidate for appreciation is conferred on them, although the act that confers artifactuality is not the same act that confers the status of candidate for appreciation. But perhaps a similar thing ordinarily happens with paintings and poems; they come to exist as artifacts at the same time that they have the status of candidate for appreciation conferred on them. Of course, being an artifact and being a candidate for appreciation are not the same thing – they are two properties which may be acquired at the same time. Many may find the notion of artifactuality being conferred rather than "worked" on an object too strange to accept and admittedly it is an unusual conception. It may be that a special account will have to be worked out for exhibited driftwood and similar cases.

Another question arising with some frequency in connection with discussions of the concept of art and seeming especially relevant in the context of the institutional theory is "How are we to conceive of paintings done by individuals such as Betsy the chimpanzee from the Baltimore Zoo?"

Calling Betsy's products paintings is not meant to prejudge that they are works of art, it is just that some word is needed to refer to them. The question of whether Betsy's paintings are art depends upon what is done with them. For example, a year or two ago the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago exhibited some chimpanzee and gorilla paintings. We must say that these paintings are not works of art. If, however, they had been exhibited a few miles away at the Chicago Art Institute they would have been works of art – the paintings would have been art if the director of the Art Institute had been willing to go out on a limb for his fellow primates. A great deal depends upon the institutional setting: one institutional setting is congenial to conferring the status of art and the other is not. Please note that although paintings such as Betsy's would remain her paintings even if exhibited at an art museum, they would be the *art* of the person responsible for their being exhibited. Betsy would not (I assume) be able to conceive of herself in such a way as to be a member of the artworld and, hence, would not be able to confer the relevant status. Art is a concept which necessarily involves human intentionality. These last remarks are not intended to denigrate the value (including beauty) of the paintings of chimpanzees shown at natural history museums or the creations of bower birds, but as remarks about what falls under a particular concept.

Danto in "Art Works and Real Things" discusses defeating conditions of the ascriptivity of art.¹⁶ He considers fake paintings, that is, copies of original paintings which are attributed to the creators of the original paintings. He argues that a painting's being a fake prevents it from being a work of art, maintaining that originality is an analytical requirement of being a work of art. That a work is derivative or imitative does not, however, he thinks, prevent it from being a work of art. I think Danto is right about fake paintings, and I can express this in terms of my own account by saying that originality in paintings is an antecedent requirement for the conferring of the candidacy for appreciation. Similar sorts of things would have to be said for similar cases in the arts other than painting. One consequence of this requirement is that there are many works of nonart which people take to be works of art, namely, those fake paintings which are not known

to be fakes. When fakes are discovered to be fakes, they do not lose that status of art because they never had the status in the first place, despite what almost everyone had thought. There is some analogy here with patent law. Once an invention has been patented, one exactly like it cannot be patented – the patent for just that invention has been "used up." In the case of patenting, of course, whether the second device is a copy or independently derived is unimportant, but the copying aspect is crucial in the artistic case. The Van Meegeren painting that was not a copy of an actual Vermeer but a painting done in the manner of Vermeer with a forged signature is a somewhat more complicated case. The painting with the forged signature is not a work of art, but if Van Meegeren had signed his own name the painting would have been.

Strictly speaking, since originality is an analytic requirement for a painting to be a work of art, an originality clause should be incorporated into my definition of "work of art." But since I have not given any analysis of the originality requirement with respect to works other than paintings, I am not in a position to supplement the definition in this way. All I can say at this time is what I said just above, namely, that originality in paintings is an antecedent requirement for the conferring of the candidacy for appreciation and that considerations of a similar sort probably apply in the other arts.

Weitz charges that the defining of "art" or its subconcepts forecloses on creativity. Some of the traditional definitions of "art" *may* have and some of the traditional definitions of its subconcepts probably *did* foreclose on creativity, but this danger is now past. At one time a playwright, for example, may have conceived of and wished to write a play with tragic features but lacking a defining characteristic as specified by, say, Aristotle's definition of "tragedy." Faced with this dilemma the playwright might have been intimidated into abandoning his project. With the present-day disregard for established genres, however, and the clamor for novelty in art, this obstacle to creativity no longer exists. Today, if a new and unusual work is created and it is similar to some members of an established type of art, it will usually be accommodated within that type, or if the new work is very unlike any existing works then a new subconcept will probably be

created. Artists today are not easily intimidated, and they regard art genres as loose guidelines rather than rigid specifications. Even if a philosopher's remarks were to have an effect on what artists do today, the institutional conception of art would certainly not foreclose on creativity. The requirement of artifactuality cannot prevent creativity, since artifactuality is a necessary condition of creativity. There cannot be an instance of creativity without an artifact of some kind being produced. The second requirement involving the conferring of status could not inhibit creativity; in fact, it encourages it. Since under the definition anything whatever may become art, the definition imposes no restraints on creativity.

The institutional theory of art may sound like saying, "A work of art is an object of which someone has said, 'I christen this object a work of art.'" And it is rather like that, although this does not mean that the conferring of the status of art is a simple matter. Just as the christening of a child has as its background the history and structure of the church, conferring the status of art has as its background the Byzantine complexity of the artworld. Some may find it strange that in the nonart cases discussed, there are ways in which the conferring can go wrong, while that does not appear to be true in art. For example, an indictment might be improperly drawn up and the person charged would not actually be indicted, but nothing parallel seems possible in the case of art. This fact just reflects the differences between the artworld and legal institutions: the legal system deals with matters of grave personal consequences and its procedures must reflect this; the artworld deals with important matters also but they are of a different sort entirely. The artworld does not require rigid procedures; it admits and even encourages frivolity and caprice without losing its serious purpose. Please note that not all legal procedures are as rigid as court procedures and that mistakes made in conferring certain kinds of legal status are not fatal to that status. A minister may make mistakes in reading the marriage ceremony, but the couple that stands before him will still acquire the status of being married. If, however, a mistake cannot be made *in* conferring the status of art, a mistake can be made *by* conferring it. In conferring the status of art on an object one assumes a certain kind of responsibility

for the object in its new status – presenting a candidate for appreciation always allows the possibility that no one will appreciate it and that the person who did the conferring will thereby lose face. One *can* make a work of art out of a sow's ear, but that does not necessarily make it a silk purse.

IV

Once the institutional nature of art is noted, the roles that such "theories of art" as the imitation and expression theories played in thinking about art can be seen in an interesting perspective. For example, as long as all art was imitative or thought to be imitative, imitation was thought to be a universal property of art. Not surprisingly, what was thought to be the only universal property of art was taken to be the defining property of art. What happened was that an assumed always-accompanying property was mistaken for an essential property, and this mistake led to a mistaken theory of art. Once the imitation theory was formulated, it tended to work in a normative way to encourage artists to be imitative. Of course, philosophical theories do not generally have much effect on the practices of men. The imitation theory in the past may, however, have had more than the usual slight impact, because it was based on a widespread feature of art and therefore reinforced an emphasis on an easily perceived characteristic and because the class of artists was relatively small and contained lines of communication.

The role played by the expression theory was quite different from that of the imitation theory. It was seen as a replacement for the imitation theory and served as its correction. Developments in art had shown that the imitation theory was incorrect and it was quite natural to seek a substitute that focused on another exhibited property of art, in this case its expressive qualities, interpreting them as expressions of the artists. I suspect that the expression theory had a normative role in a way that the imitation theory did not. That is, the expression theory was on the part of many of its proponents an attempt to "reform" art. Whether the expression theorists saw themselves as attempting to influence the creation of art with a certain kind of content or

to separate art from something which pretended to be art, they aimed at reform.

From the point of view of the institutional theory, both the imitation theory and the expression theory are mistaken as theories of art. If, however, they are approached as attempts to focus attention on aspects of art (its representative and expressive qualities) which have been and continue to be of great importance, then they have served and continue to serve a valuable function. The institutional definition of "art" does not reveal everything that art can do. A great deal remains to be said about the kinds of thing that art can do, and the imitation and expression theories indicate what *some* of these things are, although not in a perfectly straightforward way.

Notes

- 1 *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, September 1956, pp. 27–35. See also Paul Ziff's "The Task of Defining a Work of Art," *Philosophical Review*, January 1953, pp. 58–78; and W. E. Kennick's "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?" *Mind*, July 1958, pp. 317–34.
- 2 "Wittgenstein's Aesthetics," in *Language and Aesthetics*, Benjamin R. Tilghman, ed. (Lawrence, Kans., 1973), p. 14. This paper was read at a symposium at Kansas State University in April 1970. Monroe Beardsley has pointed out to me that the relationship between "game" and "major league baseball" is one of class and member rather than of genus and species.
- 3 "Family Resemblances and Generalizations Concerning the Arts," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, July 1965, pp. 219–28; reprinted in *Problems in Aesthetics*, Morris Weitz, ed., 2d ed. (London, 1970), pp. 181–97.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 185 in the Weitz anthology.
- 5 "'Art' and Artifactuality," *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, Fall 1970, pp. 105–8.
- 6 "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?" p. 330.
- 7 *Journal of Philosophy*, October 15, 1964, pp. 571–84.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 580.
- 9 Danto does not develop an institutional account of art in his article nor in a subsequent related article entitled "Art Works and Real Things," *Theoria*, Parts 1–3, 1973, pp. 1–17. In both articles Danto's primary concern is to discuss what he calls the Imitation Theory and the Real Theory of Art. Many of the things he says in these two articles are consistent with and can be incorporated into an institutional account, and his brief remarks in the later article about the ascriptivity of art are similar to the institutional theory. The institutional theory is one possible version of the ascriptivity theory.
- 10 This remark is not intended as a definition of the term "artworld," I am merely indicating what the expression is used to *refer* to. "Artworld" is nowhere defined in this book, although the referent of the expression is described in some detail.
- 11 Recently in an article entitled "The Republic of Art" in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, April 1969, pp. 145–56, T. J. Diffey has talked about the status of art being conferred. He, however, is attempting to give an account of something like an evaluative sense of "work of art" rather than the classificatory sense, and consequently the scope of his theory is much narrower than mine.
- 12 "The Possibility of Art: Remarks on a Proposal by Dickie," *Philosophical Review*, January 1973, pp. 69–82.
- 13 "Defining Art," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, July 1969, pp. 253–6.
- 14 "The Possibility of Art," p. 78.
- 15 I realized that I must make the two points noted in this paragraph as the result of a conversation with Mark Venezia. I wish to thank him for the stimulation of his remarks.
- 16 Pages 12–14.

“Art” as a Cluster Concept

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The story of philosophers’ attempts to define the concept of art has not been a happy one. Theories we have in plenty: functionalist definitions, institutional definitions, historical definitions, and various hybrids of these have been proliferating of late.¹ Less evident is any agreement about which of these radically different analyses is the correct one. Some will see in this failure of convergence yet another sign of the bankruptcy of analytic philosophy, and indeed if it be the sole aim of analytic philosophy to produce definitions, then the enterprise is deeply insolvent and in imminent danger of foreclosure. The history of post-Gettier attempts to define “knowledge” amply illustrates the difficulty of securing correct analyses, and if analysis has foundered on the notion of knowledge, what hope is there of securing success with so disputed and amorphous a notion as that of art?

The thought that “art” cannot be defined is not of course a new one: it was the central claim of several aestheticians in the 1950s who drew in varying ways on Wittgenstein’s notion of family resemblance to support their case.² Yet their negative claim that art cannot be defined, in the sense

of giving individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions that uniquely specify it, has with few exceptions been denied,³ while their positive claim that a correct characterization (rather than definition) of the concept is in family resemblance terms has been even more widely rejected.⁴ The reasons for this are familiar: if we characterize works of art as those which resemble certain paradigms, then, first, the account is incomplete (it needs to state which objects are paradigm works), and, second, the notion of resemblance is sufficiently vacuous (anything resembles anything in some respect or other, since it shares some property with it) that the characterization would count anything as art. Nor were the arguments the Wittgensteinians advanced for their position particularly compelling: the failure to find a definition might be explained by the attempt to define “art” in intrinsic, rather than relational, terms (hence the subsequent popularity of institutional and historical theories), while the claim that “art” resists definition because art is fundamentally creative fails because practices can be pursued in original ways yet be definable (chess and physics are examples), or it might be part of the definition of “art” that its products be original.⁵

Yet the subsequent failure of relational definitions to secure general assent ought to revivify the thought that “art” has not been defined because it cannot be defined, and a spirit of caution ought to encourage the thought that a view of art rooted in

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a philosophy as powerful as Wittgenstein's cannot be so simply dismissed. I shall argue here that it is not a resemblance-to-paradigm construal, but a cluster concept construal, of family resemblance that gives the correct characterization of art, and that the argument for this construal rests not on the importance of originality in art, but chiefly on an inspection of what we would say about actual and counterfactual cases of putative art objects.

The Logical Form of the Account

Wittgenstein as part of his discussion of family resemblance develops a cluster account of the meaning of proper names: "By 'Moses' I understand the man who did what the Bible relates of Moses, or at any rate a good deal of it. But how much? Have I decided how much must be proved false for me to give up my proposition as false?" Based on this account, Searle also defended a more detailed and explicit cluster account of the sense of proper names.⁶ These examples bring out the main features of cluster accounts. There are multiple criteria for the application of such concepts, though none of them are necessary. There is also a great deal of indeterminacy in how many of these criteria must apply if an object is to fall under the concept, though at the extremes there are clear cases where it does and clear cases where it does not. We can formulate the view more carefully as follows.

A cluster account is true of a concept just in case there are properties whose instantiation by an object counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward its falling under the concept. These properties are normally called *criteria*, but it is important not to associate all the connotations which this term has acquired with its use here: a criterion is simply to be understood as a property possession of which counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward an object's falling under a concept. (Nothing would be lost by referring to these properties as *characteristics*, giving a *characterization* of an object, rather than as criteria.)⁷ There are several criteria for a concept. How is the notion of their *counting toward* the application of a concept to be understood? First, if all the properties are instantiated, then the object falls under the concept: that is, they are jointly sufficient for the application of the concept. More

strongly, the cluster account also claims that if fewer than all the criteria are instantiated, this is sufficient for the application of the concept. Second, there are no properties that are individually necessary conditions for the object to fall under the concept: that is, there is no property which all objects falling under the concept must possess. These conditions together entail that though there are sufficient conditions for the application of a cluster concept, there are no *individually necessary and jointly sufficient* conditions. Third, though there are no *individually* necessary conditions for the application of such a concept, there are *disjunctively* necessary conditions: that is, it must be true that some of the criteria apply if an object falls under the concept. This clause is required, for otherwise we will merely have shown that there are sufficient conditions for a concept to obtain, rather than showing it to be a cluster concept.

Take the case of art. Suppose we can construct some set of properties, for instance, of being beautiful, being expressive, being original, and being complex and coherent. And suppose it can be shown that if various subsets of them obtain, then an object is art, that none of these properties has to be possessed by all artworks, but that all artworks must possess some of them. Then we cannot define "art" in the sense of giving individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for it, but we can offer a characterization of it—an account of what it is in terms of criteria or characteristics. Note that this account allows a great deal of indeterminacy in whether the obtaining of a particular subset of properties is sufficient for something to be art: there will be many cases where it is not clear whether this is so; what is important is that there are some subsets the obtaining of members of which is sufficient for something to be art.

There is an important difference in logical form between cluster accounts and resemblance-to-paradigm accounts. Whereas the latter specify the relevant features in terms of resemblance to some particulars, the former specify them by general properties. In the case of art, a cluster account refers to properties such as those referred to above, whereas a resemblance-to-paradigm view would hold that something is a work of art if and only if it resembles at least one of some specified paradigmatic works of art. Cluster theories thus

avoid the first difficulty with the resemblance-to-paradigm view, there being no incompleteness in the account, since no appeal is made to paradigms. And they also avoid the second objection. Resemblance is a matter of properties being possessed in common, and is consequently vacuous without further specification: cluster theories make substantial claims by specifying *what* the properties are that are relevant to determining whether something is art. Failure to distinguish these two distinct construals of the family resemblance approach—a failure of which even some of its supporters have been guilty⁸—has led to a too swift dismissal of the view.

How do we decide what properties are part of the cluster? Wittgenstein says, "Don't think, but look!"⁹ This is *not* an injunction to count only visible or intrinsic properties as part of the cluster, as has sometimes been supposed by critics of the family resemblance approach: it is a plea to see how the concept in question is used in the language. Thus, we make a distinction between art and entertainment; so art must give more than just pleasure, must be in some way challenging or exploratory. We tend to regard things in certain genres such as painting or music as artworks, because these art genres are well established. On the other hand, if an object, even if outside these genres, excels in beauty or creative originality, then that gives us reason to judge it to be art ("that dress is a work of art"). And, conversely, we tend to regard the absence of features such as skill as counting against something's being art ("my child could do that!"). Many of these criteria have been adopted by the would-be definers of art (in terms for instance of the expression of emotion, or of creative imagination), and are thus familiar in aesthetics. The novel point about the cluster theory is that it accepts them as criteria, without holding them exhaustively to specify the notion of art. A particularly useful source for discovering what are the criteria for art springs from examination of disputes about whether objects (for instance, Duchamp's readymades) are works of art, since in such cases disputants are most explicit in giving their reasons for judging something to be art or not.

Here are some properties the presence of which ordinary judgment counts toward something's being a work of art, and the absence of which counts against its being art: (1) possessing

positive aesthetic properties, such as being beautiful, graceful, or elegant (properties which ground a capacity to give sensuous pleasure);¹⁰ (2) being expressive of emotion; (3) being intellectually challenging (i.e., questioning received views and modes of thought); (4) being formally complex and coherent; (5) having a capacity to convey complex meanings; (6) exhibiting an individual point of view; (7) being an exercise of creative imagination (being original); (8) being an artifact or performance which is the product of a high degree of skill; (9) belonging to an established artistic form (music, painting, film, etc.); and (10) being the product of an intention to make a work of art. Some of these properties are themselves specified in terms of art, and the account thus exhibits a degree of circularity. But there is nothing amiss with circular accounts (nor even with circular definitions),¹¹ provided they are informative, and the account is informative not only because of the presence of noncircularly specified properties, but also because there are substantive constraints on the application of the circular criteria—we can know whether someone intends to make a work of art by consulting him, and if he does not, that counts against the object's being art.

Clearly, one may wish to dispute these particular criteria, or add others. My main aim here is to defend the cluster account of art *per se*, rather than any particular theory about which properties should be part of the cluster. However, these criteria are good *prima facie* candidates for those which should appear in a cluster account, and I will defend the form of the account in terms of these specific features.

The form of the account requires one modification. An artwork is the product of an action, preeminently of a making (an artifact), or a performing (a performance). It is *artworks* that are involved here, since something is in each case done. Hence being the product of an action is the genus of the artwork and is thus a necessary condition for something's being art. It might be thought that this is denied by those who acknowledge the existence of found art, but in fact it is not. Such art is selected, and selection is an action. Selection adds to the range of properties that can be possessed by objects, and thus alters them, even if not physically. A piece of driftwood in nature cannot express despair, nor can it be about

anything (since it lacks even derived intentionality), but when selected for display in a gallery it can express desuetude and be about failure and decay. Being the product of an action is, however, a very thin generic condition, which does not distinguish artworks from any of the other products of action (philosophy papers, chairs, pay freezes, angry words, etc.). Thus the modified cluster account holds that there is one necessary condition for something's being an artwork, but that is because of the notion of a work (the product of action), rather than because of the notion of art. I shall take this modification to be understood in all subsequent references to "art" as a cluster concept.

It might be supposed that the substantiality of the generic condition can be enhanced: the action must be part of a social practice, such a practice being a kind of complex cooperative activity, employing skills and knowledge, characterized by an evolving and developing tradition, with its own internal goods, reasons, goals, and evaluative standards.¹² It is certainly true that all art-actions known to us are undertaken as part of a cultural practice. And this is an important truth about art, from which we can hope to learn a great deal, by seeing to what extent it shares features in common with other cultural practices, in respect of their openness or resistance to multiple interpretations, the ontological peculiarities of their products, their relationship with the associated practices of using their products, and so forth. But for the notion of a cultural practice to be part of the generic condition, it must be not merely a contingent truth but a necessary one that any action of producing an artwork is undertaken as part of a practice. And that is not so: consider a possible world in which there is no art, except one day an individual goes off on her own and models in wood an elephant, paying attention to the beauty, elegance, and grace of the work, using her creative imagination to enhance the complexity and coherence of the design, skillfully putting in details to create interesting textural and color effects. She tells no one of this, and neither she nor anyone else ever does this kind of thing again. Has she produced art? It seems so; and if so, it is not necessary that an art-action be part of a cultural practice (unless we trivialize the notion by holding that one action can constitute a cultural practice). So while it is an important fact about

the activity of art that it is part of some cultural practice or other, it is a contingent, not a necessary fact.¹³

One final point should be noted about the theory. "Art" has two distinct, but related, meanings: it is used as a mass noun for artworks ("there is a lot of art in this room") and also to refer to a kind of activity ("art is a demanding career"). The cluster account proposes that artworks are the products of actions, which products possess some indeterminately large number of the listed properties. And it holds that art as an activity is the producing of such artworks.¹⁴

Methodological Considerations

So far I have merely explicated the cluster account and argued that it avoids the problems to which the resemblance-to-paradigm account succumbs. But why should one believe it? To answer this question, we need to determine first what are the constraints on the adequacy of an account, that is, a purported definition or characterization, of some concept; then we can determine whether the cluster characterization meets these constraints.

First and most obvious, the account of the concept should be *adequate to intuition*. That is, it must agree with our intuitions about what we would say about actual and counterfactual cases: if the account claims that some object satisfies the concept, but it intuitively doesn't (or vice versa), then that is one strike against the account. Particularly important test cases here are those that are problematic for rival accounts of the concept, since a proposed account should at least be an improvement on its rivals. And if there are some objects to which the application of the concept is genuinely, irresolubly, indeterminate, then the account should reflect this too, rather than simply stipulating that the concept applies, or stipulating that it does not.

Second, and related to the first constraint, the account must be *normatively adequate*. The process of matching the account to intuitions is unlikely simply to leave all intuitions as they stand. Our linguistic intuitions about particular cases may be flawed in resting on confusions, on ignorance about the language, or on many other factors. Thus some intuitions that do not fit the

proposed account may be rejected: there will be a reflective equilibrium between the account and intuitions, just as there is between principles and intuitions in moral and political philosophy. To avoid begging the question, this normative dimension must include a *theory of error*: some account must be offered of why people have the mistaken intuitions they do, of why these intuitions seem plausible to them. Ideally, this theory of error should also explain why rival accounts of the concept have enjoyed some popularity. This normative dimension is particularly important when there is a degree of interpersonal disagreement about whether a concept applies to particular cases, since the price of failing to adjudicate the dispute is likely to be that each disputant has to be ascribed a different idiolect, and hence it would follow that, contrary to their understanding of the dispute, they are not really disagreeing.

Finally, any proposed account should have *heuristic utility*: that is, it should be such as to figure in true or at least promising theories about the object to which the concept applies. This is particularly evident for scientific concepts, where definitions are formulated so as to figure in true theories of the relevant phenomena. In such cases it is often stipulative definitions that are at issue. But the claims of heuristic utility also apply, though less demandingly, to concepts in common usage, since these will also figure in explanations in the relevant domain. Hence any account of a concept should ideally fit into a larger heuristic package about the domain concerned.

Adequacy to Intuition

The simplest and most direct way to argue for the cluster account is to show that our candidate properties do indeed count toward an object's being art, that is, that they are adequate to our linguistic intuitions. Recall, however, that these properties are offered only as candidates: if objections are raised to what follows it may be possible to substitute other criteria for the ones offered in order to circumvent them. What mainly matters here is to give the cluster account itself some plausibility, rather than to defend an account of which particular criteria are involved.

Earlier we saw that three conditions must be satisfied for a concept to be a cluster one. I begin with a defense of the second condition, that the criteria are not individually necessary for something to be art. (1) Not all works of art are beautiful, elegant, or graceful: some twentieth-century art pursues "anti-aesthetic" policies, uninterested in sensuously pleasing, but deeply interested in challenging, provoking, scandalizing, using ugliness and discord as a disruptive strategy (Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* is, I would argue, such a painting). (2) Not all art is expressive of emotion: 1960s hard-edged abstraction is interested in formal relations between color properties (e.g., Josef Albers's *Homage to the Square* series), not in the expression of emotion, and an interest in the combinatorial possibilities of patterns of movement characterizes much of Merce Cunningham's work, rather than a striving after emotional effect. (3) Not all art is intellectually challenging: traditional religious art is chiefly concerned, for instance, with representing well-known religious views, rather than with seeking to probe, question, or extend them. (4) Not all art has a complex and coherent form: some of Malevich's paintings, for instance, *Black Square on a White Ground*, have an extremely simple form, as do some Cycladic sculptures; some modernist films pursue a deliberate strategy of incoherence (e.g., Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou*), and art has been at times concerned with a movement toward greater simplicity (e.g., early Baroque music with respect to Renaissance polyphony). (5) Not all art has a complex meaning: Aesop's fables and the allegorical structure of *A Pilgrim's Progress* come to mind here. (6) Not all art has been concerned with originality: most artworks are derivative, and if a tradition is to continue most *have* to be fairly derivative; and some traditions, such as the ancient Egyptian, eschew originality. (7) Not all artworks express an individual point of view: the ancient Egyptian case is relevant here too. (8) Not all artworks are the products of a high degree of skill: Duchamp's readymades were not a product of such skill (certainly not on his part, at least), nor are Alfred Wallis's pictures the products of great pictorial skill. (9) Not all artworks are in established art genres: indeed, they could not be, for if they were, no new art genres could have emerged. (10) Last, not all artworks are the products of an intention to make art: "primitive" societies

tend not to have anything like our concept of art, but we accept some of their products as art, and probably much that we now accept as “folk art” was never intended by its makers as art.

It may be objected in general to these claims that if none of these conditions are necessary, that is only because they are irrelevant to an object's being art: it would be as if I should list as a criterion, “being a granite block,” and then triumphantly proclaim that this is not a necessary condition, since not all artworks are granite blocks. Perhaps the irrelevance of some of the criteria might be argued for: but could they *all* be irrelevant—could there be a work of art lacking all of these properties? Inspection of possible cases strongly suggests that there could not be: we can make sense, for instance, of a piece of minimalist painting as art, even though it lacks expressive content, because we recognize it as being in an established artistic genre (painting), as being the product of artistic intention, perhaps as being beautiful. There is no evident way that an object lacking all of the criteria could be a work of art; and even if a plausible counterexample could be produced, the friend of the cluster account could respond by adding whatever seems the relevant criterion to the cluster—that is, she can respond by modifying the content of the account, rather than its form. Hence there is reason to think that the listed criteria, or some extension of them, are disjunctively necessary for an object to be an artwork—that is, that the third condition for the application of the cluster account to art is true. Far from undermining the cluster account, this objection to the second condition actually provides the basis for considerations favoring the third condition.

A more pressing objection is that some of the criteria really are necessary. Many of the examples given were drawn from modernist art, or from early art. But many lay people object to counting the more hyperventilating modernist efforts as art, and some anthropologists reject talk of the products of the societies they study as art. Some philosophers, such as Beardsley and Hanfling, have similar objections or doubts about counting conceptual works as art.¹⁵ If these kinds of examples were disallowed, several of the criteria would be converted into necessary conditions, and we would be striding confidently toward a definition of art.

This objection is interesting, since it throws into relief the extent to which developments in the twentieth century have rendered a cluster account of art plausible: the acceptance of anthropological objects as works of art, and the wide variety of art-making practices in the twentieth century have created an explosion of diversity in art objects that glaringly illuminates the problematic status of definitions. However, modernist and “primitive” examples are not needed to show that the conditions are not necessary, as can be seen by reconsidering those criteria where such examples alone were given. So, (1) an ugly nineteenth-century painting may still be a work of art, though likely not a very good one; (2) much of architecture and music is not concerned with the expression of emotion; (7) the lack of an individual point of view is evident in much of the great mass of derivative art that languishes in museum basements and some of that which glowers on their walls; (8) consider the possibility of a fluke masterpiece, that is, a work of great value produced by an artist of little skill, who happened to strike it lucky; and (10) an artist might do some practice sketches, in order to keep up his skills or record a view, with no intention to make art, but they may be of sufficient merit for us to count them as art;¹⁶ or consider early pioneers of a new medium, who may not intend to produce art, but merely think of their work as technical experiment or entertainment, but who produce work of sufficient merit that we judge it art (Georges Méliès's work in cinema seems to be of this kind).

There are also other reasons to think that a criterial approach was needed well before this century to capture the notion of art. In a classic article Paul Kristeller argued that the notion of the fine arts, covering the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, and music, coalesced only in the early part of the eighteenth century, receiving its first unequivocal statement by Charles Batteux in 1746.¹⁷ What before had been regarded as very diverse kinds of art were now separated off from the other arts and grouped together as the fine arts. But while Batteux's grouping was widely accepted, it was not at all obvious what all these different objects had in common that made them art. Certainly, Batteux's test of the imitation of beautiful nature is inadequate, signally failing to cover much of music and

architecture. And it should be evident that appeal to beauty on its own can not differentiate the fine arts from the others, since there are beautiful craft products. Appeal to their function of giving pleasure and not being useful won't do either, since the arts have many uses (for instruction, for ethical improvement, for conveying a sense of dignity and civilization, for swelling national pride, for helping people to work in time together, simply for living in, and so on). The cluster account can explain this state of affairs easily: different arts were grouped together as fine arts on the grounds of several overlapping considerations, rather than by one principle which could be formulated in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Hence it came to seem obvious to most that the fine arts belonged together, although it was mysterious what grounded this commonality. The history of the concept of art after this period, with its various inflections in the hands of the Romantic movement and later theorists, deposited more conceptual residues, further extending the criteria for counting something as art.¹⁸

Finally, does the first condition apply—is the instantiation of fewer than all the listed criteria by an object sufficient for it to be a work of art, that is, is obtaining the members of a proper subset of the complete set of properties sufficient for an object to be art? Certainly, it is not true that the obtaining of any subset of the complete set is sufficient: a philosophy paper may be intellectually challenging, have a complex and coherent form, a complex meaning, and be original, but it is not (sadly) thereby a work of art. But the cluster account does not claim that the obtaining of simply any subset is sufficient for something to be art. Yet there are several subsets that are sufficient, as should be made evident by considering objects that lack only one of the criteria mentioned. To take just one example, a painting which lacked a complex meaning, being a simple celebration of a country scene, but which was the product of an artistic intention, was graceful and elegant, and possessed the other criteria mentioned, would be a solid example of a work of art. There are even plausible examples of sufficient subsets which lack several criteria. Consider again ancient Egyptian art: it lacked a concern with individuality and originality, was not the product of an artistic intention in the modern

sense of "artistic," nor was it intellectually challenging (that would have been political or religious subversion), but we count it as art because of its great beauty, its use of forms that are like our artistic forms (painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.), its considerable expressive force, complex and coherent form, complex meaning, and the great degree of skill involved. And, on reflection, the obtaining of these last-mentioned six criteria seems sufficient for making an object art. If we came across objects which had these six properties on some alien planet, it would be hard to see why one should deny that we had discovered that the aliens had art. But suppose that we did find a case where the obtaining of the criteria was insufficient to make something art; then we could again change the content of the account, rather than abandon it: we could add to our present criteria the criteria which were sufficient to make the object art. The expanded set would still have a subset lacking at least four criteria, a subset which would be sufficient to make something art. (Note that challenging the content of the account [the particular criteria used] need not show that the form of the account [the appeal to criteria *per se*] is incorrect.)

An important part of showing adequacy to linguistic intuition is showing that a proposed account of a concept can avoid the problems to which its rivals succumb. The cluster account easily sidesteps pitfalls into which functional, institutional, and historical definitions stagger and stumble. To simplify greatly, a leading problem with functionalist definitions is that the functions of art are of too great a variety and too open-ended to be captured by a definition. Functionalists have generally responded by seeking to identify one master function, normally in terms of the provision of aesthetic experience, pleasure, or interest.¹⁹ But these terms have themselves proved notoriously resistant to definition, and however much one weakens their content, it will not cover Duchamp's readymades. The cluster account, in contrast, actually stresses the plurality of factors that make something art, so is unembarrassed by the variety of art's functions. Institutional definitions of art hold (roughly) that what makes something art is its having its status as art conferred on it by some member of the artworld, a concrete social institution.²⁰ Besides the problem of whether

there really is such an institution with appropriate powers, such definitions face a crippling dilemma: if representatives of the artworld have good reasons for conferring art status on some object, then it is whatever grounds those reasons—notably, the object's having certain properties—that justifies the claims of the object to be art, and hence the institutional conferring of status drops out as irrelevant. Or, alternatively, if representatives of the artworld have no good reasons for conferring the status on the object, then we have no good reason to recognize this conferral, in which case their conferral powers are also irrelevant.²¹ The cluster account avoids these problems by avoiding use of the notion of an artworld institution, and also by citing criteria giving grounds for the object's being art. Historical definitions, again very roughly, define art objects in terms of some art-historical relation to some epistemically privileged art objects. They thus are structurally similar to resemblance-to-paradigm accounts, in having to account for how we identify the epistemically privileged art objects, and thus are subject to similar challenges. More pressingly, their account of an art-historical relation is insufficiently projectable: there could be art objects which are recognizable as such, but which stand in no art-historically significant relation at all to any of our art. On a distant planet we could dig up objects which looked very much like our art and had similar functions, but which were produced by a long-dead civilization that never interacted with our own. Depending on how the art-historical relation is specified, historical definitions have either to count them not as art, or to hold that the aliens could not know that they were making art.²² The cluster account allows us to count such objects as art, since it does not appeal to the notion of an art-historically significant relation. (And even if it did, since such a relation would be just one criterion, we could still count the alien objects as art.) Hence the cluster account avoids with ease the problems that the current leading candidates for definitions encounter.

Finally, it is worth noting one further support for the linguistic adequacy of the account: the cluster account explains why some activities (such as cookery) seem to lie somewhere near the borders of art without being clearly art, since they share several properties of art (being the

exercise of individual creativity, having a capacity to give sensuous pleasure), while also lacking other relevant criteria (since they have difficulty in expressing emotion and conveying complex meanings, and are not generally the product of an artistic intention). It is a signal advantage of the cluster account over the more straightforward definitions of art that it can preserve the hardness of such cases, and allow us to explain what it is that makes them hard; such cases can be shown to be genuinely borderline and indeterminate.

Normative Adequacy

The second condition for adequacy is the normative dimension. The appeal to linguistic intuition has already involved reflective equilibrium, testing principles against intuitions, and rejecting those intuitions possessed by some people that modernist and "primitive" art are not really art. Such rejections, if they are not to be question-begging, must be grounded, as we saw, on an adequate theory of error.

As noted already, one role of a theory of error is to explain why rival definitions are attractive. The cluster account can explain very simply why many definitions of art have enjoyed their appeal: they fasten onto a particular criterion and inflate it into a necessary and sufficient condition. Expressivist definitions treat the criterion of the expression of emotion in this manner; formalist definitions so treat the criterion of complex and coherent form; functionalist definitions that appeal to aesthetic experience draw upon the first criterion. More indirectly, the cluster account can explain the appeal of the institutional and historical definitions as arising out of a perception of the inadequacy of previous attempted definitions, and trying to make room for the greater variety of factors that the cluster account directly acknowledges.

I noted earlier that there is a fair amount of disagreement over what things are art: the claims of "primitive" art, of conceptual art, and of popular music, for instance, are disputed. The cluster account can give a simple explanation of this fact of disagreement: at least one side in the dispute is misapplying the concept of art by converting criteria into necessary conditions.

(Compare someone denying that *solitaire* is a game—to use Wittgenstein's original example — because all games involve at least two participants: here what is perhaps a criterion for gamehood is incorrectly converted into a necessary condition.) The cluster account can also explain the particular nature of the disagreements in each case. Because there is a plurality of criteria, conversion of different criteria into necessary condition yields conflicting judgments about what objects are artworks. Those who deny the claim of readymades or found objects to be art may claim as a necessary condition the use of great skill, or the obtaining of significant aesthetic properties. Those who deny that "primitive" art is art may claim the necessity of the intentionality criterion, noting that tribal cultures lack the concept of art. Those who deny that rock or dance music is art may also stress intentionality as a necessary condition (many of these objects are meant simply as disposable accompaniments to dancing), or formal complexity and coherence. In all three cases, supporters of the arthood of these objects deny that the features mentioned are individually necessary conditions, and can hold them to be merely criterial. Thus the cluster account can explain both the existence and the structure of disagreements in such cases. Perhaps sufficiently complex and open-ended definitions of art, such as historical ones, may also be able to explain these disagreements, but they would have to do so in more indirect ways, such as by appealing to different ways in which to understand a narrative thread in the history of art. But in any case, the cluster account passes this test.

Besides explaining why the different sides disagree, an adequate theory of error must be able to show that at least one of the sides is wrong (that is, it has to be a theory of *error*, not merely of disagreement). Yet it may be thought that a cluster account cannot possess this normative dimension: for in countenancing a plurality of criteria, must it not render each side to the dispute unassailable, able to rest its judgments on some of the criteria in the set?

The cluster theory does, however, have adequate normative bite.²³ The opponents of conceptual art, "primitive" art, and popular music, as we saw, hold that the relevant criteria are really necessary conditions. This assumption

can be challenged by appeal to other, less contentious examples. To take some of the examples given earlier, those who insist on the necessity of the skill criterion can be challenged by the case of the fluke masterpiece, those who support intentionality as a necessary condition can be challenged by consideration of the artistic status of an artist's practice sketches, of the case of Méliès, and so forth. Thus the cluster account has the resources to argue that in certain cases one side in disputes about art is in error.

Some Objections

First, any account that draws on Wittgenstein's and Searle's cluster account of the sense of proper names faces an obvious worry: since Kripke is widely regarded as having demolished these accounts, do the same arguments undermine a cluster theory when applied to art?²⁴

The answer is a firm negative. "Art" is not a proper name, nor does it name a natural kind (indeed art may be the preeminent example of something that is *not* a natural kind). So Kripke's arguments about proper names and natural kinds do not directly apply. Nor can analogues of his arguments be applied successfully to art. Thus, it is true that Aristotle might not have been the teacher of Plato, nor have been born in Stagira, nor have had any of the other identifying characteristics which a cluster account of the sense of his name might draw on. And it is also true that gold might not have been yellow, and so forth. But we have already seen that it isn't clearly imaginable that an object could lack all the criteria of art mentioned above and still be art; and as also noted, if some plausible counterexample might be made out, the cluster account could respond simply by augmenting the criteria.

Second, there are two senses in which one can talk of art: the evaluative and classificatory senses. Distinguish these senses, and it seems that the sense of "art" we have been considering must be the classificatory sense, since some of the examples used against the claim that "art" can be defined are instances of bad art (e.g., the ugly Victorian painting). As used in the evaluative sense, "art" is a term of commendation, so in this sense all art is good. Perhaps defining "art" in the classificatory sense is hopeless: but for all that has

been shown so far, defining "art" in the evaluative sense isn't.

However, the assumption that there are two senses of "art" is badly grounded. Consider the notion of health: someone may be in good or bad health, just as art may be good or bad, but "health" is still an evaluative concept. So the mere fact that we can call some art good, and some bad, does not show that there is a distinct, classificatory sense of "art." We can thus hold that the only notion of "art" is an evaluative one. The cluster theory is consistent with this, since the cluster of properties relevant to establishing something as art includes evaluative properties, such as being beautiful, and being the exercise of creative imagination. For instance, an artwork can be bad, but still be art, since it possesses the other criteria relevant to establishing whether it is an artwork. But the notion of art is evaluative, since the question of whether these good-making features are possessed is always relevant to the question of whether something is art. So the cluster theory, far from being challenged on this point, helps to free us from the illusion that there are two distinct senses of "art."

Third, it may be held that the cluster account is vacuous. For I have said that if objections are advanced to the particular criteria put forward, then the cluster account has the option of substituting others in their place to render it more adequate to intuition. But if this is so, then there are no possible counterexamples to the account, so it is empty of content.²⁵

This is not so. There are possible counterexamples to cluster accounts: they are successful definitions of art. By giving a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for something to be art, one could show that the cluster account is mistaken: if successful, institutional, historical, or functionalist definitions are counterexamples to the cluster account. So the cluster account is not vacuous. Further, the point of the earlier remarks about the flexibility of the cluster account was to distinguish between the form of the account, and the particular distinct contents it may possess. The form is given by the existence of criteria for a concept, construed in the way laid out in the second paragraph of the first section. The content proposed involved ten particular criteria: the important point is that rejecting this particular account of content need

not undermine the correctness of the form of the cluster account. Of course, I have also suggested that these ten criteria are correct, and in so doing I have made a further substantive claim about content, as well as a substantive point about form.

Finally, it may be objected that the cluster account is in fact a definition. Not all definitions are given in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions: there are disjunctive definitions too. For instance, Robert Stecker has given a historical functionalist account of art that involves disjunctive conditions, and he calls this account a definition.²⁶ This being so, it may seem that at best I am sailing under false colors, having in fact given a definition while claiming I am not, or at worst that the entire cluster account is based on a contradiction, since it holds that one cannot define art, even though it itself is a definition of art.

What is at issue here is partly merely a verbal dispute. If one wants to call disjunctive accounts, as well as conjunctive accounts, "definitions," then there is perhaps no great point in insisting that only the latter are really definitions. The substantive point for which I have argued here would, however, be left untouched by such a concession: the substantive point is that one cannot give a definition of art in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, and one must instead use a disjunctive account of the form specified (whether or not one decides to call this cluster account a definition). Thus one could recast the main contentions of the chapter without settling the dispute about what is correctly called a definition, and certainly there is no contradiction involved in holding that conjunctive accounts of art are inadequate and only cluster accounts are successful.

However, in a somewhat less concessive spirit let me add that a conjunctive account seems to be what philosophers generally have in mind when they are after a definition (think for instance of the dispute about the third conjunct required to define "knowledge" that dominated epistemology in the immediate aftermath of Gettier's paper). And further, as the number of disjuncts required in a cluster account increases, the plausibility of thinking of the account as a definition decreases. The general discussion in the third section, and particularly the examples sketched or suggested of sufficient conditions involving fewer than all

the criteria, give reasons to think that an adequate cluster account of art will be highly disjunctive. So the intuitive pull of claiming that the result is a definition is it seems to me weak. Hence even on the largely verbal point, there is reason to think that the cluster account is not aptly classified as a definition.

Conclusion: Heuristic Utility

What I have attempted to show here is not that art is beyond all doubt a cluster concept, but rather that by distinguishing the cluster account from the resemblance-to-paradigm account one can sidestep the established objections to Weitz's position, and also that the cluster account is adequate to our linguistic intuitions, subject to some degree of normative critique. Since the cluster account can cope with some central counterexamples to the currently most influential definitions of art, it is a promising characterization of art.

Since all claims that one cannot define "art" invariably produce a flurry of would-be definitions in response,²⁷ it would be well to close by pointing out the attractions a cluster account possesses as a guide for philosophical aesthetics. In other words, we need briefly to consider the question of heuristic utility to round out the defense of the cluster account.

Much of the best work in aesthetics has not been concerned with the question of definition, but has attempted to understand the diverse capacities that art possesses: we have several important studies of representation, of expression, of symbolic systems, for instance.²⁸ Representational, expressive, and symbolic capacities are possessed not just by artworks, but by language, by bodily gestures, and by mental states. Thus a great deal of the best work in aesthetics has been concerned not with what uniquely specifies art, but with exploring what art has in common with other human domains and with examining the connections between aesthetics and the philosophies of mind, action, and language. The cluster theory both explains why this approach should be fruitful, and also fosters it, for what makes something an artwork is a matter of its possessing a range of properties that are shared with other human domains. The

theory also naturally fosters greater attention to the diversity of properties that go toward making something an artwork, and so renders plausible a view of interpretation as comprising a diverse set of activities, concerned with ascribing a wide variety of properties to objects, where these properties may have different criteria of ascription. I think on independent grounds that such a patchwork theory of interpretation is correct, and the cluster account here fits smoothly with that theory of interpretation.²⁹ And it also sits naturally with a view of the value of art as consisting in a set of diverse values, rather than one single kind of excellence, a view in favor of which there is also much to be said.

The cluster account of art, then, encourages aestheticians to examine connections between philosophical aesthetics and other branches of philosophy, and at the same time justifies a greater sensitivity to the diversity of art forms and artistically relevant properties. Both of these research programs for aesthetics are independently attractive and promising; the cluster theory explains why this should be so, and also justifies the view that both are likely to continue to be fruitful.

The failure to give a definition of "art" is indeed a failure for that myopic view of analytic philosophy which takes it to be concerned largely with the giving of definitions, in the sense of giving individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the application of concepts. But the contrasting view of analytic philosophy that sees it as an attempt at high-level theorizing is not called into question by that failure, and the cluster theory is an example of how analytic philosophy of art can still be fruitful, even when it forswears the pursuit of definitions. If the cluster account offered here is correct, the project of definition that has been a central concern of recent philosophical aesthetics is doomed to failure. And that project has been pursued, even though an attractive alternative to it has been available since the early 1950s, an alternative whose power was overlooked because of a failure to distinguish between two distinct forms it could take. Once we distinguish those forms, we can see the true power of the cluster view. In the early 1950s the philosophical fly was given its chance to get out of the fly bottle, but didn't take it. Maybe this time it will.³⁰

Notes

- 1 Functional definitions include: Monroe Beardsley, "Redefining Art" in his *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, ed. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982); M. W. Rowe, "The Definition of 'Art,'" *Philosophical Quarterly* 41 (1991): 271–86; and Oswald Hanfling, "Art, Artifact and Function," *Philosophical Investigations* 18 (1995): 31–48. Institutional definitions include: George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974); and T. J. Diffey, "The Republic of Art" in his *The Republic of Art and Other Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991). Historical definitions include: Jerrold Levinson, "Defining Art Historically" in his *Music, Art, and Metaphysics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); and James Carney, "The Style Theory of Art," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1991): 272–89. An example of a hybrid theory is the historical functionalism defended in Robert Stecker, *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), part 1.
- 2 Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, ed. Joseph Margolis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Paul Ziff, "The Task of Defining a Work of Art," *Philosophical Review* 62 (1953): 58–78; and W. E. Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?" *Mind* 67 (1958): 317–34.
- 3 The exceptions include, for the case of music, Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), chap. 4; and for art in general, Noël Carroll, "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 313–26. Goehr holds that "musical work" is an "open" concept, i.e., not susceptible to definition in the sense specified above, and Carroll holds the same for "artwork."
- 4 Carroll for instance claims that it "was subjected to a number of decisive criticisms." "Historical Narratives," 315.
- 5 For a useful discussion of the standard criticisms, see Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), chap. 1.
- 6 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), part 1, 79; and John Searle, "Proper Names," in P. F. Strawson, ed., *Philosophical Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
- 7 "Criterion" has acquired several additional, vaguely specified, and perhaps inconsistent meanings, and worries about these are not relevant to the cluster account. For an attempt to sort out some of the vagueness in the idea of a criterion as used by philosophers in other contexts, see William G. Lycan, "Noninductive Evidence: Recent Work on Wittgenstein's 'Criteria,'" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (1971): 109–25.
- 8 Weitz, "Role of Theory," seems largely to have the resemblance-to-paradigm approach in mind on p. 149, and the cluster approach in mind on pp. 150–51. The main thrust of Weitz's position seems to be toward the latter, and if this is correct, then the standard attacks on him are based on a misconstrual. Wittgenstein also seems largely to support the cluster construal of family resemblance. Note that the resemblance-to-paradigm view if further worked out collapses into the cluster view, for if we are asked to say in *what respect* something resembles the paradigm, then we have to refer to a general property, and when we do so, there is no further need to refer to the paradigm.
- 9 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part 1, 66.
- 10 Note that the concept of the aesthetic appealed to here is a narrow one: roughly, beauty and its subspecies.
- 11 For instance, subjectivist definitions of color (e.g., necessarily, something is red if it looks red to normal observers under normal conditions) are circular but informative, provided one can specify the conditions and observers other than simply as those under which or to whom red things look red.
- 12 Compare Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 175f.; Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Philosophy of Art after Analysis and Romanticism," section 5, in *Analytic Aesthetics*, ed. Richard Shusterman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); and Noël Carroll, "Art, Practice, and Narrative," *Monist* 71 (1988): 140–56, at section 2. Note that a practice should not be characterized as an *established* kind of activity, as MacIntyre defines it, since then the first artworks cannot be counted as artworks, for they are not part of a practice that is established at that point.
- 13 The contingency claim seems to be held by Wolterstorff ("Philosophy of Art," 52), but both Carroll and MacIntyre seem to think that being a part of a cultural practice is a necessary condition for an action to be an art-action.

- 14 Note that "product" here has to be construed in a broader sense than normal not just to include an entity that can logically survive the termination of the actions that originate or alter it (artifacts and selected objects), but also to cover the totality of those actions themselves (the case of performances). "Producing" has also to be construed in a similarly broad fashion.
- 15 See Beardsley, "Redefining Art," 313, for his doubts about some conceptual art; Hanfling, "Art, Artifact and Function," 45, denies that "'way out' objects and performances" are art. He correctly notes that many people do not recognize such objects as art—but there again, of course, many people do.
- 16 There are similar real-life cases: the oil sketches of Neapolitan buildings made in the 1780s by the Welsh painter Thomas Jones appear not to have been considered by either the artist or his audience as artworks, but in the last forty years the sketches have been hailed as some of the most original artworks of the late eighteenth century.
- 17 Paul O. Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951): 496–527, and 13 (1952): 17–46. For recent support for the thesis, see Paul Mattick, Jr., ed. *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially the introduction.
- 18 The concept of art has therefore changed over its history; but note this does not commit us to a historical definition of art, since the task is to characterize the concept as it is *now*.
- 19 See in particular Beardsley, "Redefining Art."
- 20 See Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic*.
- 21 Compare Richard Wollheim, *Fainting as an Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 14–16.
- 22 See Gregory Currie, "Aliens, Too," *Analysis* 53 (1993): 116–18.
- 23 It is not in general true that pluralistic theories are normatively impotent: for an argument showing that there is adequate room for normative improvement in the case of pluralistic moral theories, see my "Moral Pluralism," *Philosophical Papers* 22 (1993): 17–40, and "Rag Bags, Disputes and Moral Pluralism," *Utilitas* 11 (1999): 37–48.
- 24 Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), lecture 1.
- 25 The objection is due to Crispin Sartwell.
- 26 Stecker, *Artworks*, part 1. At pp. 24–25, n. 10, Stecker says that, given what I mean by a cluster account, he has no objection to the classification of his own view as such an account.
- 27 This was the result of Weitz's attack, as noted by Davies, *Definitions of Art*, 9.
- 28 For instance, Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), and Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), are studies of the nature of representation, but their results are not limited to artistic representation.
- 29 For a working-out of such a view of interpretation, see my "Interpreting the Arts: The Patchwork Theory," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 597–609, and "Metaphor and the Understanding of Art," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 97 (1997), 223–41.
- 30 A shorter version of this chapter was delivered to the national American Society for Aesthetics conference in 1995. I am grateful to the participants at the session, and in particular to my commentator, Crispin Sartwell, for their comments. The chapter has also benefited greatly from comments by Oswald Hanfling, Alex Neill, and Robert Stecker.

When is Art?

Nelson Goodman

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1. The Pure in Art

If attempts to answer the question “What is art?” characteristically end in frustration and confusion, perhaps – as so often in philosophy – the question is the wrong one. A reconception of the problem, together with application of some results of a study of the theory of symbols, may help to clarify such moot matters as the role of symbolism in art and the status as art of the ‘found object’ and so-called ‘conceptual art’.

One remarkable view of the relation of symbols to works of art is illustrated in an incident bitingly reported by Mary McCarthy:¹

Seven years ago, when I taught in a progressive college, I had a pretty girl student in one of my classes who wanted to be a short-story writer. She was not studying with me, but she knew that I sometimes wrote short stories, and one day, breathless and glowing, she came up to me in the hall, to tell me that she had just written a story that her writing teacher, a Mr. Converse, was terribly excited about. “He thinks it’s wonderful”

she said, “and he’s going to help me fix it up for publication.”

I asked what the story was about; the girl was a rather simple being who loved clothes and dates. Her answer had a deprecating tone. It was about a girl (herself) and some sailors she had met on the train. But then her face, which had looked perturbed for a moment, gladdened.

“Mr. Converse is going over it with me and we’re going to put in the symbols.”

Today the bright-eyed art student will more likely be told, with equal subtlety, to keep out the symbols; but the underlying assumption is the same: that symbols, whether enhancements or distractions, are extrinsic to the work itself. A kindred notion seems to be reflected in what we take to be symbolic art. We think first of such works as Bosch’s *Garden of Delight* or Goya’s *Caprichos* or the Unicorn tapestries or Dali’s drooping watches, and then perhaps of religious paintings, the more mystical the better. What is remarkable here is less the association of the symbolic with the esoteric or unearthly than the classification of works as symbolic upon the basis of their having symbols as their subject matter – that is, upon the basis of their depicting rather than of being symbols. This leaves as nonsymbolic art not only works that depict nothing but also portraits, still-lives, and landscapes where the subjects are rendered in a straightforward way

Nelson Goodman, “When is Art?” from *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1978, pp. 57–70. Reproduced with permission of Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

without arcane allusions and do not themselves stand as symbols.

On the other hand, when we choose works for classification as nonsymbolic, as art without symbols, we confine ourselves to works without subjects; for example, to purely abstract or decorative or formal paintings or buildings or musical compositions. Works that represent anything, no matter what and no matter how prosaically, are excluded; for to represent is surely to refer, to stand for, to symbolize. Every representational work is a symbol; and art without symbols is restricted to art without subject.

That representational works are symbolic according to one usage and nonsymbolic according to another matters little so long as we do not confuse the two usages. What matters very much, though, according to many contemporary artists and critics, is to isolate the work of art as such from whatever it symbolizes or refers to in any way. Let me set forth in quotation marks, since I am offering it for consideration without now expressing any opinion of it, a composite statement of a currently much advocated program or policy or point of view:

"What a picture symbolizes is external to it, and extraneous to the picture as a work of art. Its subject if it has one, its references – subtle or obvious – by means of symbols from some more or less well-recognized vocabulary, have nothing to do with its aesthetic or artistic significance or character. Whatever a picture refers to or stands for in any way, overt or occult, lies outside it. What really counts is not any such relationship to something else, not what the picture symbolizes, but what it is in itself – what its own intrinsic qualities are. Moreover, the more a picture focuses attention on what it symbolizes, the more we are distracted from its own properties. Accordingly, any symbolization by a picture is not only irrelevant but disturbing. Really pure art shuns all symbolization, refers to nothing, and is to be taken for just what it is, for its inherent character, not for anything it is associated with by some such remote relation as symbolization."

Such a manifesto packs punch. The counsel to concentrate on the intrinsic rather than the extrinsic, the insistence that a work of art is what it is rather than what it symbolizes, and the con-

clusion that pure art dispenses with external reference of all kinds have the solid sound of straight thinking, and promise to extricate art from smothering thickets of interpretation and commentary.

2. A Dilemma

But a dilemma confronts us here. If we accept this doctrine of the formalist or purist, we seem to be saying that the content of such works as the *Garden of Delight* and the *Caprichos* doesn't really matter and might better be left out. If we reject the doctrine, we seem to be holding that what counts is not just what a work is but lots of things it isn't. In the one case we seem to be advocating lobotomy on many great works; in the other we seem to be condoning impurity in art, emphasizing the extraneous.

The best course, I think, is to recognize the purist position as all right and all wrong. But how can that be? Let's begin by agreeing that what is extraneous is extraneous. But is what a symbol symbolizes always external to it? Certainly not for symbols of all kinds. Consider the symbols:

- (a) "this string of words", which stands for itself;
- (b) "word", which applies to itself among other words;
- (c) "short", which applies to itself and some other words and many other things; and
- (d) "having seven syllables", which has seven syllables.

Obviously what some symbols symbolize does not lie entirely outside the symbols. The cases cited are, of course, quite special ones, and the analogues among pictures – that is, pictures that are pictures of themselves or include themselves in what they depict – can perhaps be set aside as too rare and idiosyncratic to carry any weight. Let's agree for the present that what a work represents, except in a few cases like these, is external to it and extraneous.

Does this mean that any work that represents nothing meets the purist's demands? Not at all. In the first place, some surely symbolic works such as Bosch's paintings of weird monsters, or the tapestry of a unicorn, represent nothing; for

there are no such monsters or demons or unicorns anywhere but in such pictures or in verbal descriptions. To say that the tapestry 'represents a unicorn' amounts only to saying that it is a unicorn-picture, not that there is any animal, or anything at all that it portrays.² These works, even though there is nothing they represent, hardly satisfy the purist. Perhaps, though, this is just another philosopher's quibble; and I won't press the point. Let's agree that such pictures, though they represent nothing, are representational in character, hence symbolic and so not 'pure'. All the same, we must note in passing that their being representational involves no representation of anything outside them, so that the purist's objection to them cannot be on that ground. His case will have to be modified in one way or another, with some sacrifice of simplicity and force.

In the second place, not only representational works are symbolic. An abstract painting that represents nothing and is not representational at all may express, and so symbolize, a feeling or other quality, or an emotion or idea.³ Just because expression is a way of symbolizing something outside the painting – which does not itself sense, feel or think – the purist rejects abstract expressionist as well as representational works.

For a work to be an instance of 'pure' art, of art without symbols, it must on this view neither represent nor express nor even be representational or expressive. But is that enough? Granted, such a work does not stand for anything outside it; all it has are its own properties. But of course if we put it that way, all the properties any picture or anything else has – even such a property as that of representing a given person – are properties of the picture, not properties outside it.

The predictable response is that the important distinction among the several properties a work may have lies between its internal or intrinsic and its external or extrinsic properties; that while all are indeed its own properties, some of them obviously relate the picture to other things; and that a nonrepresentational, nonexpressive work has only internal properties.

This plainly doesn't work; for under any even faintly plausible classification of properties into internal and external, any picture or anything else has properties of both kinds. That a picture is in the Metropolitan Museum, that it was painted in Duluth, that it is younger than Methuselah,

would hardly be called internal properties. Getting rid of representation and expression does not give us something free of such external or extraneous properties.

Furthermore, the very distinction between internal and external properties is a notoriously muddled one. Presumably the colors and shapes in a picture must be considered internal; but if an external property is one that relates the picture or object to something else, then colors and shapes obviously must be counted as external; for the color or shape of an object not only may be shared by other objects but also relates the object to others having the same or different colors or shapes.

Sometimes, the terms "internal" and "intrinsic" are dropped in favor of "formal". But the formal in this context cannot be a matter of shape alone. It must include color, and if color, what else? Texture? Size? Material? Of course, we may at will enumerate properties that are to be called formal; but the 'at will' gives the case away. The rationale, the justification, evaporates. The properties left out as nonformal can no longer be characterized as all and only those that relate the picture to something outside it. So we are still faced with the question what if any *principle* is involved – the question how the properties that matter in a nonrepresentational, nonexpressive painting are distinguished from the rest.

I think there is an answer to the question; but to approach it, we'll have to drop all this high-sounding talk of art and philosophy, and come down to earth with a thud.

3. Samples

Consider again an ordinary swatch of textile in a tailor's or upholsterer's sample book. It is unlikely to be a work of art or to picture or express anything. It's simply a sample – a simple sample. But what is it a sample of? Texture, color, weave, thickness, fiber content. . . . ; the whole point of this sample, we are tempted to say, is that it was cut from a bolt and has all the same properties as the rest of the material. But that would be too hasty.

Let me tell you two stories – or one story with two parts. Mrs. Mary Tricias studied such a sample book, made her selection, and ordered

from her favorite textile shop enough material for her overstuffed chair and sofa – insisting that it be exactly like the sample. When the bundle came she opened it eagerly and was dismayed when several hundred 2" × 3" pieces with zigzag edges exactly like the sample fluttered to the floor. When she called the shop, protesting loudly, the proprietor replied, injured and weary, "But Mrs. Tricias, you said the material must be exactly like the sample. When it arrived from the factory yesterday, I kept my assistants here half the night cutting it up to match the sample."

This incident was nearly forgotten some months later, when Mrs. Tricias, having sewed the pieces together and covered her furniture, decided to have a party. She went to the local bakery, selected a chocolate cupcake from those on display and ordered enough for fifty guests, to be delivered two weeks later. Just as the guests were beginning to arrive, a truck drove up with a single huge cake. The lady running the bake-shop was utterly discouraged by the complaint. "But Mrs. Tricias, you have no idea how much trouble we went to. My husband runs the textile shop and he warned me that your order would have to be in one piece."

The moral of this story is not simply that you can't win, but that a sample is a sample of some of its properties but not others. The swatch is a sample of texture, color, etc. but not of size or shape. The cupcake is a sample of color, texture, size, and shape, but still not of all its properties. Mrs. Tricias would have complained even more loudly if what was delivered to her was like the sample in having been baked on that same day two weeks earlier.

Now in general which of its properties is a sample a sample of? Not all its properties; for then the sample would be a sample of nothing but itself. And not its 'formal' or 'internal' or, indeed, any one specifiable set of properties. The kind of property sampled differs from case to case: the cupcake but not the swatch is a sample of size and shape; a specimen of ore may be a sample of what was mined at a given time and place. Moreover, the sampled properties vary widely with context and circumstance. Although the swatch is normally a sample of its texture, etc. but not of its shape or size, if I show it to you in answer to the question "What is an upholsterer's sample?" it then functions not as a sample of

the material but as a sample of an upholsterer's sample, so that its size and shape are now among the properties it is a sample of.

In sum, the point is that a sample is a sample of – or *exemplifies* – only some of its properties, and that the properties to which it bears this relationship of exemplification⁴ vary with circumstances and can only be distinguished as those properties that it serves, under the given circumstances, as a sample of. Being a sample of or exemplifying is a relationship something like that of being a friend; my friends are not distinguished by any single identifiable property or cluster of properties, but only by standing, for a period of time, in the relationship of friendship with me.

The implications for our problem concerning works of art may now be apparent. The properties that count in a purist painting are those that the picture makes manifest, selects, focuses upon, exhibits, heightens in our consciousness – those that it shows forth – in short, those properties that it does not merely possess but *exemplifies*, stands as a sample of.

If I am right about this, then even the purist's purest painting symbolizes. It exemplifies certain of its properties. But to exemplify is surely to symbolize – exemplification no less than representation or expression is a form of reference. A work of art, however free of representation and expression, is still a symbol even though what it symbolizes be not things or people or feelings but certain patterns of shape, color, texture that it shows forth.

What, then, of the purist's initial pronouncement that I said facetiously is all right and all wrong? It is all right in saying that what is extraneous is extraneous, in pointing out that what a picture represents often matters very little, in arguing that neither representation nor expression is required of a work, and in stressing the importance of so-called intrinsic or internal or 'formal' properties. But the statement is all wrong in assuming that representation and expression are the only symbolic functions that paintings may perform, in supposing that what a symbol symbolizes is always outside it, and in insisting that what counts in a painting is the mere possession rather than the exemplification of certain properties.

Whoever looks for art without symbols, then, will find none – if all the ways that works

symbolize are taken into account. Art without representation or expression or exemplification – yes; art without all three – *no*.

To point out that purist art consists simply in the avoidance of certain kinds of symbolization is not to condemn it but only to uncover the fallacy in the usual manifestos advocating purist art to the exclusion of all other kinds. I am not debating the relative virtues of different schools or types or ways of painting. What seems to me more important is that recognition of the symbolic function of even purist painting gives us a clue to the perennial problem of when we do and when we don't have a work of art.

The literature of aesthetics is littered with desperate attempts to answer the question "What is art?" This question, often hopelessly confused with the question "What is good art?", is acute in the case of found art – the stone picked out of the driveway and exhibited in a museum – and is further aggravated by the promotion of so-called environmental and conceptual art. Is a smashed automobile fender in an art gallery a work of art? What of something that is not even an object, and not exhibited in any gallery or museum – for example, the digging and filling-in of a hole in Central Park as prescribed by Oldenburg? If these are works of art, then are all stones in the driveway and all objects and occurrences works of art? If not, what distinguishes what is from what is not a work of art? That an artist calls it a work of art? That it is exhibited in a museum or gallery? No such answer carries any conviction.

As I remarked at the outset, part of the trouble lies in asking the wrong question – in failing to recognize that a thing may function as a work of art at some times and not at others. In crucial cases, the real question is not "What objects are (permanently) works of art?" but "When is an object a work of art?" – or more briefly, as in my title, "When is art?"

My answer is that just as an object may be a symbol – for instance, a sample – at certain times and under certain circumstances and not at others, so an object may be a work of art at some times and not at others. Indeed, just by virtue of functioning as a symbol in a certain way does an object become, while so functioning, a work of art. The stone is normally no work of art while in the driveway, but may be so when on display in an art museum. In the driveway, it usually per-

forms no symbolic function. In the art museum, it exemplifies certain of its properties – e.g., properties of shape, color, texture. The hole-digging and filling functions as a work insofar as our attention is directed to it as an exemplifying symbol. On the other hand, a Rembrandt painting may cease to function as a work of art when used to replace a broken window or as a blanket.

Now, of course, to function as a symbol in some way or other is not in itself to function as a work of art. Our swatch, when serving as a sample, does not then and thereby become a work of art. Things function as works of art only when their symbolic functioning has certain characteristics. Our stone in a museum of geology takes on symbolic functions as a sample of the stones of a given period, origin, or composition, but it is not then functioning as a work of art.

The question just what characteristics distinguish or are indicative of the symbolizing that constitutes functioning as a work of art calls for careful study in the light of a general theory of symbols. That is more than I can undertake here, but I venture the tentative thought that there are five symptoms of the aesthetic:⁵ (1) syntactic density, where the finest differences in certain respects constitute a difference between symbols – for example, an ungraduated mercury thermometer as contrasted with an electronic digital-read-out instrument; (2) semantic density, where symbols are provided for things distinguished by the finest differences in certain respects – for example, not only the ungraduated thermometer again but also ordinary English, though it is not syntactically dense; (3) relative repleteness, where comparatively many aspects of a symbol are significant – for example, a single-line drawing of a mountain by Hokusai where every feature of shape, line, thickness, etc. counts, in contrast with perhaps the same line as a chart of daily stockmarket averages, where all that counts is the height of the line above the base; (4) exemplification, where a symbol, whether or not it denotes, symbolizes by serving as a sample of properties it literally or metaphorically possesses; and finally (5) multiple and complex reference, where a symbol performs several integrated and interacting referential functions,⁶ some direct and some mediated through other symbols.

These symptoms provide no definition, much less a full-blooded description or a celebration.

Presence or absence of one or more of them does not qualify or disqualify anything as aesthetic; nor does the extent to which these features are present measure the extent to which an object or experience is aesthetic.⁷ Symptoms, after all, are but clues; the patient may have the symptoms without the disease, or the disease without the symptoms. And even for these five symptoms to come somewhere near being disjunctively necessary and conjunctively (as a syndrome) sufficient might well call for some redrawing of the vague and vagrant borderlines of the aesthetic. Still, notice that these properties tend to focus attention on the symbol rather than, or at least along with, what it refers to. Where we can never determine precisely just which symbol of a system we have or whether we have the same one on a second occasion, where the referent is so elusive that properly fitting a symbol to it requires endless care, where more rather than fewer features of the symbol count, where the symbol is an instance of properties it symbolizes and may perform many interrelated simple and complex referential functions, we cannot merely look through the symbol to what it refers to as we do in obeying traffic lights or reading scientific texts, but must attend constantly to the symbol itself as in seeing paintings or reading poetry. This emphasis upon the nontransparency of a work of art, upon the primacy of the work over what it refers to, far from involving denial or disregard of symbolic functions, derives from certain characteristics of a work as a symbol.⁸

Quite apart from specifying the particular characteristics differentiating aesthetic from other symbolization, the answer to the question "When is art?" thus seems to me clearly to be in terms of symbolic function. Perhaps to say that an object is art when and only when it so functions is to overstate the case or to speak elliptically. The Rembrandt painting remains a work of art, as it remains a painting, while functioning only as a blanket; and the stone from the driveway may not strictly become art by functioning as art.⁹ Similarly, a chair remains a chair even if never sat on, and a packing case remains a packing case even if never used except for sitting on. To say what art does is not to say what art is; but I submit that the former is the matter of primary and peculiar concern. The further question of defining stable property in terms of

ephemeral function – the what in terms of the when – is not confined to the arts but is quite general, and is the same for defining chairs as for defining objects of art. The parade of instant and inadequate answers is also much the same: that whether an object is art – or a chair – depends upon intent or upon whether it sometimes or usually or always or exclusively functions as such. Because all this tends to obscure more special and significant questions concerning art, I have turned my attention from what art is to what art does.

A salient feature of symbolization, I have urged, is that it may come and go. An object may symbolize different things at different times, and nothing at other times. An inert or purely utilitarian object may come to function as art, and a work of art may come to function as an inert or purely utilitarian object. Perhaps, rather than art being long and life short, both are transient.

The bearing that this inquiry into the nature of works of art has upon the overall undertaking of this book should by now have become quite clear. How an object or event functions as a work explains how, through certain modes of reference, what so functions may contribute to a vision of – and to the making of – a world.

Notes

- 1 "Settling the Colonel's Hash", *Harper's Magazine*, 1954; reprinted in *On the Contrary* (Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), p. 225.
- 2 See further "On Likeness of Meaning" (1949) and "On Some Differences about Meaning" (1953), *PP*, pp. 221–38; also *LA*, pp. 21–6.
- 3 Motion, for instance, as well as emotion may be expressed in a black and white picture; for example, see [...] the discussion of expression in *LA*, pp. 85–95.
- 4 For further discussion of exemplification, see *LA*, pp. 52–67.
- 5 See *LA*, pp. 252–5 and the earlier passages there alluded to. The fifth symptom has been added above as the result of conversations with Professors Paul Hernadi and Alan Nagel of the University of Iowa.
- 6 This excludes ordinary ambiguity, where a term has two or more quite independent denotations at quite different times and in quite different contexts.

- 7 That poetry, for example, which is not syntactically dense, is less art or less likely to be art than painting that exhibits all four symptoms thus does not at all follow. Some aesthetic symbols may have fewer of the symptoms than some nonaesthetic symbols. This is sometimes misunderstood.
- 8 This is another version of the dictum that the purist is all right and all wrong.
- 9 Just as what is not red may look or be said to be red at *certain times*, so what is not art may function as or be said to be art at certain times. That an object functions as art at a given time, that it has the status of art at that time, and that it is art at that time may all be taken as saying the same thing – so long as we take none of these as ascribing to the object any stable status.

Art and Its Objects

Richard Wollheim

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4

Let us begin with the hypothesis that works of art are physical objects. I shall call this for the sake of brevity the “physical-object hypothesis.” Such a hypothesis is a natural starting point: if only for the reason that it is plausible to assume that things are physical objects unless they very obviously aren’t. Certain things very obviously aren’t physical objects. Now though it may not be obvious that works of art are physical objects, they don’t seem to belong among these other things. They don’t, that is, immediately group themselves along with thoughts, or periods of history, or numbers, or mirages. Furthermore, and more substantively, this hypothesis accords with many traditional conceptions of Art and its objects and what they are.

5

Nevertheless the hypothesis that all works of art are physical objects can be challenged. For our

Richard Wollheim, from *Art and Its Objects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, sections 4–10, 15–16, 18–20, 35–38, pp. 3–10, 20–24, 26–30, 64–76. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

purposes it will be useful, and instructive, to divide this challenge into two parts: the division conveniently corresponding to a division within the arts themselves. For in the case of certain arts the argument is that there is no physical object that can with any plausibility be identified as the work of art: there is no object existing in space and time (as physical objects must) that can be picked out and thought of as a piece of music or a novel. In the case of other arts – most notably painting and sculpture – the argument is that, though there are physical objects of a standard and acceptable kind that could be, indeed generally are, identified as works of art, such identifications are wrong.

The first part of this challenge is, as we shall see, by far the harder to meet. However it is, fortunately, not it, but the second part of the challenge, that potentially raises such difficulties for aesthetics.

6

That there is a physical object that can be identified as *Ulysses* or *Der Rosenkavalier* is not a view that can long survive the demand that we should pick out or point to that object. There is, of course, the copy of *Ulysses* that is on my table before me now, there is the performance of *Der*

Rosenkavalier that I will go to tonight, and both these two things may (with some latitude, it is true, in the case of the performance) be regarded as physical objects. Furthermore, a common way of referring to these objects is by saying things like "*Ulysses* is on my table," "I shall see *Rosenkavalier* tonight": from which it would be tempting (but erroneous) to conclude that *Ulysses* just is my copy of it, *Rosenkavalier* just is tonight's performance.

Tempting, but erroneous; and there are a number of very succinct ways of bringing out the error involved. For instance, it would follow that if I lost my copy of *Ulysses*, *Ulysses* would become a lost work. Again, it would follow that if the critics disliked tonight's performance of *Rosenkavalier*, then they dislike *Rosenkavalier*. Clearly neither of these inferences is acceptable.

We have here two locutions or ways of describing the facts: one in terms of works of art, the other in terms of copies, performances, etc. of works of art. Just because there are contexts in which these two locutions are interchangeable, this does not mean that there are no contexts, moreover no contexts of a substantive kind, in which they are not interchangeable. There very evidently are such contexts, and the physical-object hypothesis would seem to overlook them to its utter detriment.

7

But, it might now be maintained, of course it is absurd to identify *Ulysses* with my copy of it or *Der Rosenkavalier* with tonight's performance, but nothing follows from this of a general character about the wrongness of identifying works of art with physical objects. For what was wrong in these two cases was the actual physical object that was picked out and with which the identification was then made. The validity of the physical-object hypothesis, like that of any other hypothesis, is quite unaffected by the consequences of misapplying it.

For instance, it is obviously wrong to say that *Ulysses* is my copy of it. Nevertheless, there is a physical object, of precisely the same order of being as my copy, though significantly not called a "copy," with which such an identification would be quite correct. This object is the author's

manuscript: that, in other words, which Joyce wrote when he wrote *Ulysses*.

On the intimate connection, which undoubtedly does exist, between a novel or a poem on the one hand and the author's manuscript on the other, I shall have something to add later. But the connection does not justify us in asserting that one just is the other. Indeed, to do so seems open to objections not all that dissimilar from those we have just been considering. The critic, for instance, who admires *Ulysses* does not necessarily admire the manuscript. Nor is the critic who has seen or handled the manuscript in a privileged position as such when it comes to judgment on the novel. And – here we have come to an objection directly parallel to that which seemed fatal to identifying *Ulysses* with my copy of it – it would be possible for the manuscript to be lost and *Ulysses* to survive. None of this can be admitted by the person who thinks that *Ulysses* and the manuscript are one and the same thing.

To this last objection someone might retort that there are cases (e.g., *Love's Labour Won*, Kleist's *Robert Guiscard*) where the manuscript is lost and the work is lost, and moreover the work is lost because the manuscript is lost. Of course there is no real argument here, since nothing more is claimed than that there are *some* cases like this. Nevertheless the retort is worth pursuing, for the significance of such cases is precisely the opposite of that intended. Instead of reinforcing, they actually diminish, the status of the manuscript. For if we now ask, When is the work lost when the manuscript is lost?, the answer is, When and only when the manuscript is unique: but then this would be true for any copy of the work were it unique.

Moreover, it is significant that in the case of *Rosenkavalier* it is not even possible to construct an argument corresponding to the one about *Ulysses*. To identify an opera or any other piece of music with the composer's holograph, which looks the corresponding thing to do, is implausible because (for instance), whereas an opera can be heard, a holograph cannot be. In consequence it is common at this stage of the argument, when music is considered, to introduce a new notion, that of the ideal performance, and then to identify the piece of music with this. There are many difficulties here: in the present context it is enough to point out that this step could not

conceivably satisfy the purpose for which it was intended; that is, that of saving the physical-object hypothesis. For an ideal performance cannot be, even in the attenuated sense in which we have extended the term to ordinary performances, a physical object.

8

A final and desperate expedient to save the physical-object hypothesis is to suggest that all those works of art which cannot plausibly be identified with physical objects are identical with classes of such objects. A novel, of which there are copies, is not my or your copy but is the class of all its copies. An opera, of which there are performances, is not tonight's or last night's performance, nor even the ideal performance, but is the class of all its performances. (Of course, strictly speaking, this suggestion doesn't save the hypothesis at all: since a class of physical objects isn't necessarily, indeed is most unlikely to be, a physical object itself. But it saves something like the spirit of the hypothesis.)

However, it is not difficult to think of objections to this suggestion. Ordinarily we conceive of a novelist as writing a novel, or a composer as finishing an opera. But both these ideas imply some moment in time at which the work is complete. Now suppose (which is not unlikely) that the copies of a novel or the performances of an opera go on being produced for an indefinite period: then, on the present suggestion, there is no such moment, let alone one in their creator's lifetime. So we cannot say that *Ulysses* was written by Joyce, or that Strauss composed *Der Rosenkavalier*. Or, again, there is the problem of the unperformed symphony, or the poem of which there is not even a manuscript: in what sense can we now say that these things even *exist*?

But perhaps a more serious, certainly a more interesting, objection is that in this suggestion what is totally unexplained is why the various copies of *Ulysses* are all said to be copies of *Ulysses* and nothing else, why all the performances of *Der Rosenkavalier* are reckoned performances of that one opera. For the ordinary explanation of how we come to group copies or performances as being of this book or of that opera is by reference to something else, something other than them-

selves, to which they stand in some special relation. (Exactly what this other thing is, or what is the special relation in which they stand to it is, of course, something we are as yet totally unable to say.) But the effect, indeed precisely the point, of the present suggestion is to eliminate the possibility of any such reference: if a novel or opera just is its copies or its performances, then we cannot, for purposes of identification, refer from the latter to the former.

The possibility that remains is that the various particular objects, the copies or performances, are grouped as they are, not by reference to some other thing to which they are related, but in virtue of some relation that holds between them: more specifically, in virtue of resemblance.

But, in the first place, all copies of *Ulysses*, and certainly all performances of *Der Rosenkavalier*, are not perfect matches. And if it is now said that the differences do not matter, either because the various copies or performance resemble each other in all relevant respects, or because they resemble each other more than they resemble the copies or performances of any other novel or opera, neither answer is adequate. The first answer begs the issue, in that to talk of relevant respects presupposes that we know how, say, copies of *Ulysses* are grouped together: the second answer evades the issue, in that though it may tell us why we do not, say, reckon any of the performances of *Der Rosenkavalier* as performances of *Arabella*, it gives us no indication why we do not set some of them up separately, as performances of some third opera.

Secondly, it seems strange to refer to the resemblance between the copies of *Ulysses* or the performances of *Rosenkavalier* as though this were a brute fact: a fact, moreover, which could be used to explain why they were copies or performances of what they are. It would be more natural to think of this so-called "fact" as something that itself stood in need of explanation: and, moreover, as finding its explanation in just that which it is here invoked to explain. In other words, to say that certain copies or performances are of *Ulysses* or *Rosenkavalier* because they resemble one another seems precisely to reverse the natural order of thought: the resemblance, we would think, follows from, or is to be understood in terms of, the fact that they are of the same novel or opera.

9

However, those who are ready to concede that some kinds of work of art are not physical objects will yet insist that others are. *Ulysses* and *Der Rosenkavalier* may not be physical objects, but the *Donna Velata* and Donatello's *St. George* most certainly are.

I have already suggested (section 5) that the challenge to the physical-object hypothesis can be divided into two parts. It will be clear that I am now about to embark on the second part of the challenge: namely, that which allows that there are (some) physical objects that could conceivably be identified as works of art, but insists that it would be quite erroneous to make the identification.

(To some, such a course of action may seem superfluous. For enough has been said to disprove the physical-object hypothesis. That is true; but the argument that is to come has its intrinsic interest, and for that reason is worth developing. Those for whom the interest of all philosophical argument is essentially polemical, and who have been convinced by the preceding argument, may choose to think of that which is to follow as bearing upon a revised or weakened version of the physical-object hypothesis: namely, that some works of art are physical objects.)

10

In the Pitti there is a canvas (No. 245) 85 cm × 64 cm: in the Museo Nazionale, Florence, there is a piece of marble 209 cm high. It is with these physical objects that those who claim that the *Donna Velata* and the *St. George* are physical objects would naturally identify them.

This identification can be disputed in (roughly) one or other of two ways. It can be argued that the work of art has properties which are incompatible with certain properties that the physical object has, alternatively it can be argued that the work of art has properties which no physical object could have: in neither case could the work of art be the physical object.

An argument of the first kind would run: We say of the *St. George* that it moves with life (Vasari). Yet the block of marble is inanimate.

Therefore the *St. George* cannot be that block of marble. An argument of the second kind would run: We say of the *Donna Velata* that it is exalted and dignified (Wölfflin). Yet a piece of canvas in the Pitti cannot conceivably have these qualities. Therefore the *Donna Velata* cannot be that piece of canvas.

These two arguments, I suggest, are not merely instances of these two ways of arguing, they are characteristic instances. For the argument that there is an incompatibility of property between works of art and physical objects characteristically concentrates on the representational properties of works of art. The argument that works of art have properties that physical objects could not have characteristically concentrates on the expressive properties of works of art. The terms "representational" and "expressive" are used here in a very wide fashion, which, is it hoped, will become clear as the discussion proceeds.

[. . .]

15

We might begin by considering two false views of how works of art acquire their expressiveness: not simply so as to put them behind us, but because each is in its way a pointer to the truth. Neither view requires us to suppose that works of art are anything other than physical objects.

The first view is that works of art are expressive because they have been produced in a certain state of mind or feeling on the part of the artist: and to this the rider is often attached, that it is this mental or emotional condition that they express. But if we take the view first of all with the rider attached, its falsehood is apparent. For it is a common happening that a painter or sculptor modifies or even rejects a work of his because he finds that it fails to correspond to what he experienced at the time. If, however, we drop the rider, the view now seems arbitrary or perhaps incomplete. For there seems to be no reason why a work should be expressive simply because it was produced in some heightened condition if it is also admitted that the work and the condition need not have the same character. (It would be like trying to explain why a man who has measles is ill by citing the fact that he was in contact with someone else who was also ill when that other

person was not ill with measles or anything related to measles.) It must be understood that I am not criticising the view because it allows an artist to express in his work a condition other than that which he was in at the time: my case is rather that the view does wrong both to allow this fact and to insist that the expressiveness of the work can be accounted for exclusively in terms of the artist's condition.

However, what is probably the more fundamental objection to this view, and is the point that has been emphasised by many recent philosophers, is that the work's expressiveness now becomes a purely external feature of it. It is no longer something that we can or might observe, it is something that we infer from what we observe: it has been detached from the object as it manifests itself to us, and placed in its history, so that it now belongs more to the biography of the artist than to criticism of the work. And this seems wrong. For the qualities of gravity, sweetness, fear, that we invoke in describing works of art seem essential to our understanding of them; and if they are, they cannot be extrinsic to the works themselves. They cannot be, that is, mere attributes of the experiences or activities of Masaccio, of Raphael, of Grünewald – they inhere rather in the Brancacci frescoes, in the *Granduca Madonna*, in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*.

The second view is that works of art are expressive because they produce or are able to produce a certain state of mind or feeling in the spectator: moreover (and in the case of this view it is difficult to imagine the rider ever detached), it is this mental or emotional condition that they express. This view is open to objections that closely parallel those we have just considered.

For, in the first place, it seems clearly false. Before works even of the most extreme emotional intensity, like Bernini's *St. Teresa* or the black paintings of Goya, it is possible to remain more or less unexcited to the emotion that it would be agreed they express. Indeed, there are many theories that make it a distinguishing or defining feature of art that it should be viewed with detachment, that there should be a distancing on the part of the spectator between what the work expresses and what he experiences: although it is worth noting, in passing, that those theorists who have been most certain that works of art do not arouse emotion, have also been uncertain, in

some cases confused, as to how this comes about: sometimes attributing it to the artist, sometimes to the spectator; sometimes, that is, saying that the artist refrains from giving the work the necessary causal power, sometimes saying that the spectator holds himself back from reacting to this power.

However, the main objection to this view, as to the previous one, is that it removes what we ordinarily think of as one of the essential characteristics of the work of art from among its manifest properties, locating it this time not in its past but in its hidden or dispositional endowment. And if it is now argued that this is a very pertinent difference, in that the latter is, in principle at least, susceptible to our personal verification in a way in which the former never could be, this misses the point. Certainly we can actualize the disposition, by bringing it about that the work produces in us the condition it is supposed to express: and there is clearly no corresponding way in which we can actualize the past. But though this is so, this still does not make the disposition itself – and it is with this, after all, that the work's expressiveness is equated – any the more a property that we can observe.

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And yet there seems to be something to both these views: as an examination of some hypothetical cases might bring out.

For let us imagine that we are presented with a physical object – we shall not for the moment assume that it either is or is supposed to be a work of art – and the claim is made on its behalf, in a way that commands our serious attention, that it is expressive of a certain emotion: say, grief. We then learn that it had been produced quite casually, as a diversion or as part of a game: and we must further suppose that it arouses neither in us nor in anyone else anything more than mild pleasure. Can we, in the light of these facts, accept the claim? It is conceivable that we might; having certain special reasons.

But now let us imagine that the claim is made on behalf not of a single or isolated object, but of a whole class of objects of which our original example would be a fair specimen, and it turns out that what was true of it is true of all of them

both as to how they were produced and as to what they produce in us. Surely it is impossible to imagine any circumstances in which we would allow *this* claim.

But what are we to conclude from this? Are we to say that the two views are true in a general way, and that error arises only when we think of them as applying in each and every case? The argument appears to point in this direction, but at the same time it seems an unsatisfactory state in which to leave the matter. (Certain contemporary moral philosophers, it is true, seem to find a parallel situation in their own area perfectly congenial, when they say that an individual action can be right even though it does not satisfy the utilitarian criterion, provided that that sort of action, or that that action in general, satisfies the criterion: the utilitarian criterion, in other words, applies on the whole, though not in each and every case.)

The difficulty here is this: Suppose we relax the necessary condition in the particular case because it is satisfied in general, with what right do we continue to regard the condition that is satisfied in general as necessary? Ordinarily the argument for regarding a condition as necessary is that there could not be, or at any rate is not, anything of the requisite kind that does not satisfy it. But this argument is not open to us here. Accordingly, at the lowest, we must be prepared to give some account of how the exceptions arise: or, alternatively, why we are so insistent on the condition in general. To return to the example: it seems unacceptable to say that a single object can express grief though it was not produced in, nor is it productive of, that emotion, but that a class of objects cannot express grief unless most of them, or some of them, or a fair sample of them, satisfy these conditions – unless we can explain why we discriminate in this way.

At this point what we might do is to turn back and look at the special reasons, as I called them, which we might have for allowing an individual object to be expressive of grief though it did not satisfy the conditions that hold generally. There seem to be roughly two lines of thought which if followed might allow us to concede expressiveness. We might think, "Though the person who made this object didn't feel grief when he made it, yet this is the sort of thing I would make if I felt grief. . . ." Alternatively we might think, "Though I don't feel grief when I look at this here

and now, yet I am sure that in other circumstances I would. . . ." Now, if I am right in thinking that these are the relevant considerations, we can begin to see some reason for our discrimination between the particular and the general case. For there is an evident difficulty in seeing how these considerations could apply to a whole class of objects: given, that is, that the class is reasonably large. For our confidence that a certain kind of object was what we would produce if we experienced grief would be shaken by the fact that not one (or very few) had actually been produced in grief: equally, our confidence that in other circumstances we should feel grief in looking at them could hardly survive the fact that no one (or scarcely anyone) ever had. The special reasons no longer operating, the necessary conditions reassert themselves.

[. . .]

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The question, however, might now be raised. Suppose the two criteria, which hitherto have been taken so closely together, should diverge: for they might: how could we settle the issue? And the difficulty here is not just that there is no simple answer to the question, but that it looks as though any answer given to it would be arbitrary. Does this, therefore, mean that the two criteria are quite independent, and that the whole concept of expression, if, that is, it is constituted as I have suggested, is a contingent conjunction of two elements, which could as easily fall apart as together?

I shall argue that the concept of expression, at any rate as this applies to the arts, is indeed complex, in that it lies at the intersection of two constituent notions of expression. We can gain some guidance as to these notions from the two views of expression we have been considering, for they are both reflected in, though also distorted by, these views. But, whereas the two views seem quite contingently connected, and have no clear point of union, once we understand what these notions are we can see how and why they interact. Through them we can gain a better insight into the concept of expression as a whole.

In the first place, and perhaps most primitively, we think of a work of art as expressive in

the sense in which a gesture or a cry would be expressive: that is to say, we conceive of it as coming so directly and immediately out of some particular emotional or mental state that it bears unmistakable marks of that state upon it. In this sense the word remains very close to its etymology: *ex-primere*, to squeeze out or press out. An expression is a secretion of an inner state. I shall refer to this as "natural expression." Alongside this notion is another, which we apply when we think of an object as expressive of a certain condition because, when we are in that condition, it seems to us to match, or correspond with, what we experience inwardly: and perhaps when the condition passes, the object is also good for reminding us of it in some special poignant way, or for reviving it for us. For an object to be expressive in this sense, there is no requirement that it should originate in the condition that it expresses, nor indeed is there any stipulation about its genesis: for these purposes it is simply a piece of the environment which we appropriate on account of the way it seems to reiterate something in us. Expression in this sense I shall (following a famous nineteenth-century usage) call "correspondence."

We may now link this with the preceding discussion by saying that the preoccupation with what the artist felt, or might have felt, reflects a concern with the work of art as a piece of natural expression: whereas the preoccupation with what the spectator feels, or might feel, reflects a concern with the work of art as an example of correspondence.

But though these two notions are logically distinct, in practice they are bound to interact: indeed, it is arguable that it goes beyond the limit of legitimate abstraction to imagine one without the other. We can see this by considering the notion of appropriateness, or fittingness, conceived as a relation holding between expression and expressed. We might think that such a relation has a place only in connection with correspondences. For in the case of natural expression, the link between inner and outer is surely too powerful or too intimate to allow its mediation. It is not because tears seem like grief that we regard them as an expression of grief: nor does a man when he resorts to tears do so because they match his condition. So we might think. But in reality, at any level above the most primitive,

natural expression will always be coloured or influenced by some sense of what is appropriate; there will be a feedback from judgment, however inchoate or unconscious this may be, to gesture or exclamation. Again, when we turn to correspondence, it might seem that here we are guided entirely by appropriateness or the fit: that is to say, we appeal uniquely to the appearances or characteristics of objects, which hold for us, in some quite unanalyzed way, an emotional significance. We do not (we might think) check these reactions against observed correlations. But once again this is a simplification. Apart from a few primitive cases, no physiognomic perception will be independent of what is for us the supreme example of the relationship between inner and outer: that is, the human body as the expression of the psyche. When we endow a natural object or an artifact with expressive meaning, we tend to see it corporeally: that is, we tend to credit it with a particular look which bears a marked analogy to some look that the human body wears and that is constantly conjoined with an inner state.

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To the question, Can a work of art be a physical object if it is also expressive?, it now looks as though we can, on the basis of the preceding account of expression, give an affirmative answer. For that account was elaborated with specifically in mind those arts where it is most plausible to think of a work of art as a physical object. But it may seem that with both the two notions of expression that I have tried to formulate, there remains an unexamined or problematic residue. And in the two cases the problem is much the same.

It may be stated like this: Granted that in each case the process I have described is perfectly comprehensible, how do we come at the end of it to attribute a human emotion to an object? In both cases the object has certain characteristics. In one case these characteristics mirror, in the other case they are caused by, certain inner states of ours. Why, on the basis of this, do the names of the inner states get transposed to the objects?

The difficulty with this objection might be put by saying that it treats a philosophical

reconstruction of a part of our language as though it were a historical account. For it is not at all clear that, in the cases where we attribute emotions to objects in the ways that I have tried to describe, we have any other way of talking about the objects themselves. There is not necessarily a prior description in nonemotive terms, on which we superimpose the emotive description. Or, to put the same point in nonlinguistic terms, it is not always the case that things that we see as expressive, we can or could see in any other way. In such cases what we need is not a justification, but an explanation, of our language. That I hope to have given.

20

We have now completed our discussion of the physical-object hypothesis, and this would be a good moment at which to pause and review the situation.

The hypothesis, taken literally, has been clearly shown to be false: in that there are arts where it is impossible to find physical objects that are even candidates for being identified with works of art (sections 6–8). However, as far as those other arts are concerned where such physical objects can be found, the arguments against the identification – namely, those based on the fact that works of art have properties not predicable of physical objects – seemed less cogent (sections 9–19). I have now to justify the assertion that I made at the very beginning of the discussion (section 5), that it was only in so far as it related to these latter arts that the challenge to this hypothesis had any fundamental significance for aesthetics.

The general issue raised, whether works of art are physical objects, seems to compress two questions: the difference between which can be brought out by accenting first one, then the other, constituent word in the operative phrase. Are works of art *physical* objects? Are works of art *physical objects*? The first question would be a question about the stuff or constitution of works of art, what in the broadest sense they are made of: more specifically, Are they mental? or physical? are they constructs of the mind? The second question would be a question about the category to which works of art belong, about the criteria of identity and individuation applicable to them:

more specifically, Are they universals, of which there are instances?, or classes, of which there are members?, are they particulars? Roughly speaking, the first question might be regarded as metaphysical, the second as logical. And, confusingly enough, both can be put in the form of a question about what kind of thing a work of art is.

Applying this distinction to the preceding discussion, we can now see that the method of falsifying the hypothesis that all works of art are physical objects has been to establish that there are some works of art that are not objects (or particulars) at all: whereas the further part of the case, which depends upon establishing that those works of art which are objects are nevertheless not physical, has not been made good. If my original assertion is to be vindicated, I am now required to show that what is of moment in aesthetics is the physicality of works of art rather than their particularity.

[. . .]

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Before, however, pursuing this last point, the consequences of which will occupy us more or less for the rest of this essay, I want to break off the present discussion (which began with section 20) and go back and take up an undischarged commitment: which is that of considering the consequences of rejecting the hypothesis that works of art are physical objects, in so far as those arts are concerned where there is no physical object with which the work of art could be plausibly identified. This will, of course, be in pursuance of my general aim – which has also directed the preceding discussion – of establishing that the rejection of the hypothesis has serious consequences for the philosophy of art only in so far as those arts are concerned where there *is* such an object.

I have already stated (sections 5, 20) that, once it is conceded that certain works of art are not physical *objects*, the subsequent problem that arises, which can be put by asking, What sort of thing are they?, is essentially a logical problem. It is that of determining the criteria of identity and individuation appropriate to, say, a piece of music or a novel. I shall characterise the status of such things by saying that they are (to employ a

term introduced by Peirce) *types*. Correlative to the term “type” is the term “token.” Those physical objects which (as we have seen) can out of desperation be thought to be works of art in cases where there are no physical objects that can plausibly be thought of in this way, are *tokens*. In other words, *Ulysses* and *Der Rosenkavalier* are types; my copy of *Ulysses* and tonight’s performance of *Rosenkavalier* are tokens of those types. The question now arises, What is a type?

The question is very difficult, and, unfortunately, to treat it with the care and attention to detail that it deserves is beyond the scope of this essay.

We might begin by contrasting a type with other sorts of thing that it is not. Most obviously we could contrast a type with a *particular*: this I shall take as done. Then we could contrast it with other various kinds of nonparticulars: with a *class* (of which we say that it has *members*), and a *universal* (of which we say that it has *instances*). An example of a class would be the class of red things: an example of a universal would be redness: and examples of a type would be the word “red” and the Red Flag – where this latter phrase is taken to mean not this or that piece of material, kept in a chest or taken out and flown at a masthead, but the flag of revolution, raised for the first time in 1830 and that which many would willingly follow to their death.

Let us introduce as a blanket expression for types, classes, universals, the term *generic entity*, and, as a blanket expression for those things which fall under them, the term *element*. Now we can say that the various generic entities can be distinguished according to the different ways or relationships in which they stand to their elements. These relationships can be arranged on a scale of intimacy or intrinsicity. At one end of the scale we find classes, where the relationship is at its most external or extrinsic: for a class is merely made of, or constituted by, its members which are extensionally conjoined to form it. The class of red things is simply a construct out of all those things which are (timelessly) red. In the case of universals the relation is more intimate: in that a universal is present in all its instances. Redness is in all red things. With types we find the relationship between the generic entity and its elements at its most intimate: for not merely is the type present in all its tokens like the uni-

versal in all its instances, but for much of the time we think and talk of the type as though it were itself a kind of token, though a peculiarly important or pre-eminent one. In many ways we treat the Red Flag as though it were a red flag (cf. “We’ll keep the Red Flag flying high”).

These varying relations in which the different generic entities stand to their elements are also reflected (if, that is, this is *another* fact) in the degree to which both the generic entities and their elements can satisfy the same predicates. Here we need to make a distinction between sharing properties and properties being transmitted. I shall say that when A and B are both *f*, *f* is shared by A and B. I shall further say that when A is *f* because B is *f*, or B is *f* because A is *f*, *f* is transmitted between A and B. (I shall ignore the sense or direction of the transmission, i.e. I shall not trouble, even where it is possible, to discriminate between the two sorts of situation I have mentioned as instances of transmission.)

First, we must obviously exclude from consideration properties that can pertain only to tokens (e.g. properties of location in space and time) and equally those which pertain only to types (e.g. “was invented by”). When we have done this, the situation looks roughly as follows: Classes can share properties with their members (e.g. the class of big things is big), but this is very rare: moreover, where it occurs it will be a purely contingent or fortuitous affair, i.e. there will be no transmitted properties. In the cases of both universals and types, there will be shared properties. Red things may be said to be exhilarating, and so also redness. Every red flag is rectangular, and so is the Red Flag itself. Moreover, many, if not all, the shared properties will be transmitted.

Let us now confine our attention to transmitted properties because it is only they which are relevant to the difference in relationship between, on the one hand, universals and types and, on the other hand, their elements. Now there would seem to be two differences in respect of transmitted properties which distinguish universals from types. In the first place, there is likely to be a far larger range of transmitted properties in the case of types than there is with universals. The second difference is this: that in the case of universals no property that an instance of a certain universal has necessarily, i.e. that it has in virtue of being an instance of that universal, can be transmitted

to the universal. In the case of types, on the other hand, all and only those properties that a token of a certain type has necessarily, i.e. that it has in virtue of being a token of that type, will be transmitted to the type. Examples would be: Redness, as we have seen, may be exhilarating, and, if it is, it is so for the same reason that its instances are, i.e. the property is transmitted. But redness cannot be red or coloured, which its instances are necessarily. On the other hand, the Union Jack is coloured and rectangular, properties which all its tokens have necessarily: but even if all its tokens happened to be made of linen, this would not mean that the Union Jack itself was made of linen.

To this somewhat negative account of a type – concentrated largely on what a type is not – we now need to append something of a more positive kind, which would say what it is for various particulars to be gathered together as tokens of the same type. For it will be appreciated that there corresponds to every universal and to every type a class: to redness the class of red things, to the Red Flag the class of red flags. But the converse is not true. The question therefore arises, What are the characteristic circumstances in which we postulate a type? The question, we must appreciate, is entirely conceptual: it is a question about the structure of our language.

A very important set of circumstances in which we postulate types – perhaps a central set, in the sense that it may be possible to explain the remaining circumstances by reference to them – is where we can correlate a class of particulars with a piece of human invention: these particulars may then be regarded as tokens of a certain type. This characterization is vague, and deliberately so: for it is intended to comprehend a considerable spectrum of cases. At one end we have the case where a particular is produced, and is then copied: at the other end, we have the case where a set of instructions is drawn up which, if followed, give rise to an indefinite number of particulars. An example of the former would be the Brigitte Bardot looks: an example of the latter would be the Minuet. Intervening cases are constituted by the production of a particular which was made in order to be copied, e.g. the Boeing 707, or the construction of a mould or matrix which generates further particulars, e.g. the Penny Black. There are many ways of arranging the cases – according, say, to the degree of human inten-

tion that enters into the proliferation of the type, or according to the degree of match that exists between the original piece of invention and the tokens that flow from it. But there are certain resemblances between all the cases: and with ingenuity one can see a natural extension of the original characterization to cover cases where the invention is more classificatory than constructive in nature, e.g. the Red Admiral.

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It will be clear that the preceding characterization of a type and its tokens offers us a framework within which we can (at any rate roughly) understand the logical status of things like operas, ballets, poems, etchings, etc.: that is to say, account for their principles of identity and individuation. To show exactly where these various kinds of things lie within this framework would involve a great deal of detailed analysis, more than can be attempted here, and probably of little intrinsic interest. I shall touch very briefly upon two general sets of problems, both of which concern the feasibility of the project. In this section I shall deal with the question of how the type is identified or (what is much the same thing) how the tokens of a given type are generated. In the next section I shall deal with the question of what properties we are entitled to ascribe to a type. These two sets of questions are not entirely distinct: as we can see from the fact that there is a third set of questions intermediate between the other two, concerning how we determine whether two particulars are or are not tokens of the same type. These latter questions, which arise for instance sharply in connection with translation, I shall pass over. I mention them solely to place those which I shall deal with in perspective.

First, then, as to how the type is identified. In the case of any work of art that it is plausible to think of as a type, there is what I have called a piece of human invention: and these pieces of invention fall along the whole spectrum of cases as I characterized it. At one end of the scale, there is the case of a poem, which comes into being when certain words are set down on paper or perhaps, earlier still, when they are said over in the poet's head (cf. the Croce-Collingwood

theory). At the other end of the scale is an opera which comes into being when a certain set of instructions, i.e. the score, is written down, in accordance with which performances can be produced. As an intervening case we might note a film, of which different copies are made: or an etching or engraving, where different sheets are pulled from the same matrix, i.e. the plate.

There is little difficulty in all this, so long as we bear in mind from the beginning the variety of ways in which the different types can be identified, or (to put it another way) in which the tokens can be generated from the initial piece of invention. It is if we begin with too limited a range of examples that distortions can occur. For instance, it might be argued that, if the tokens of a certain poem are the many different inscriptions that occur in books reproducing the word order of the poet's manuscript, then "strictly speaking" the tokens of an opera must be the various pieces of sheet music or printed scores that reproduce the marks on the composer's holograph. Alternatively, if we insist that it is the performances of the opera that are the tokens, then, it is argued, it must be the many readings or "voicings" of the poem that are *its* tokens.

Such arguments might seem to be unduly barren or pedantic, if it were not that they revealed something about the divergent media of art: moreover, if they did not bear upon the issues to be discussed in the next section.

37

It is, we have seen, a feature of types and their tokens, not merely that they may share properties, but that when they do, these properties may be transmitted. The question we have now to ask is whether a limit can be set upon the properties that may be transmitted: more specifically, since it is the type that is the work of art and therefore that with which we are expressly concerned, whether there are any properties – always of course excluding those properties which can be predicated only of particulars – that belong to tokens and cannot be said *ipso facto* to belong to their types.

It might be thought that we have an answer, or at least a partial answer, to this question in the suggestion already made, that the properties

transmitted between token and type are only those which the tokens possess necessarily. But a moment's reflection will show that any answer along these lines is bound to be trivial. For there is no way of determining the properties that a token of a given type has necessarily, independently of determining the properties of that type: accordingly, we cannot use the former in order to ascertain the latter. We cannot hope to discover what the properties of the Red Flag are by finding out what properties the various red flags have necessarily: for how can we come to know that e.g. this red flag is necessarily red, prior to knowing that the Red Flag itself is red?

There are, however, three observations that can be made here on the basis of our most general intuitions. The first is that there are no properties or sets of properties that cannot pass from token to type. With the usual reservations, there is nothing that can be predicated of a performance of a piece of music that could not also be predicated of that piece of music itself. This point is vital. For it is this that ensures what I have called the harmlessness of denying the physical-object hypothesis in the domain of those arts where the denial consists in saying that works of art are not physical *objects*. For though they may not be objects but types, this does not prevent them from having physical properties. There is nothing that prevents us from saying that Donne's *Satires* are harsh on the ear, or that Dürer's engraving of St. Anthony has a very differentiated texture, or that the conclusion of "Celeste Aida" is *pianissimo*.

The second observation is that, though any single property may be transmitted from token to type, it does not follow that all will be: or to put it another way, a token will have some of its properties necessarily, but it need not have all of them necessarily. The full significance of this point will emerge later.

Thirdly, in the case of *some* arts it is necessary that not all properties should be transmitted from token to type: though it remains true that for any single property it might be transmitted. The reference here is, of course, to the performing arts – to operas, plays, symphonies, ballet. It follows from what was said above that anything that can be predicated of a performance of a piece of music can also be predicated of the piece of music itself: to this we must now add that not

every property that can be predicated of the former *ipso facto* belongs to the latter. This point is generally covered by saying that in such cases there is essentially an element of *interpretation*, where for these purposes interpretation may be regarded as the production of a token that has properties in excess of those of the type.

"Essentially" is a word that needs to be taken very seriously here. For, in the first place, there are certain factors that might disguise from us the fact that every performance of a work of art involves, or is, an interpretation. One such factor would be antiquarianism. We could – certainly if the evidence were available – imagine a *Richard III* produced just as Burbage played it, or *Das Klagende Lied* performed just as Mahler conducted it. But though it would be possible to bring about in this way a replica of Burbage's playing or Mahler's conducting, we should none the less have interpretations of *Richard III* and *Das Klagende Lied*, for this is what Burbage's playing and Mahler's conducting were, though admittedly the first. Secondly, it would be wrong to think of the element of interpretation – assuming that this is now conceded to be present in the case of all performances – as showing something defective. Suzanne Langer, for instance, has characterized the situation in the performing arts by saying that e.g. the piece of music the composer writes is "an incomplete work": "the performance" she says "is the completion of a musical work." But this suggests that the point to which the composer carries the work is one which he could, or even should, have gone beyond. To see how radical a reconstruction this involves of the ways in which we conceive the performing arts, we need to envisage what would be involved if it were to be even possible to eliminate interpretation. For instance, one requirement would be that we should have for each performing art what might be called, in some very strong sense, a universal notation: such that we could designate in it every characteristic that now originates at the point of performance. Can we imagine across the full range of the arts what such a notation would be like? With such a notation there would no longer be any executant arts: the whole of the execution would have been anticipated in the notation. What assurance can we have that the reduction of these arts to mere mechanical skills would not

in turn have crucial repercussions upon the way in which we regard or assess the performing arts?

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However, if we no longer regard it as a defect in certain arts that they require interpretation, it might still seem unsatisfactory that there should be this discrepancy within the arts: that, for instance, the composer or the dramatist should be denied the kind of control over his work that the poet or the painter enjoys.

In part, there just *is* a discrepancy within the arts. And this discrepancy is grounded in very simple facts of very high generality, which anyhow lie outside art: such as that words are different from pigments; or that it is human beings we employ to act and human beings are not all exactly alike. If this is the source of dissatisfaction, the only remedy would be to limit art very strictly to a set of processes or stuffs that were absolutely homogeneous in kind.

In part, however, the dissatisfaction comes from exaggerating the discrepancy, and from overlooking the fact that in the nonperforming arts there is a range of ways in which the spectator or audience can take the work of art. It is, I suggest, no coincidence that *this* activity, of taking the poem or painting or novel in one way rather than another, is also called "interpretation." For the effect in the two cases is the same, in that the control of the artist over his work is relaxed.

Against this parallelism between the two kinds of interpretation, two objections can be raised. The first is that the two kinds of interpretation differ in order or level. For whereas performative interpretation occurs only within certain arts, critical interpretation pertains to all: more specifically a critical interpretation can be placed upon any given performative interpretation – so the point of the parallelism vanishes, in that the performing arts still remain in a peculiar or discrepant situation. Now I do not want to deny that any performance of a piece of music or a play can give rise to a critical interpretation: the question, however, is, When this happens, is this on the same level as a performative interpretation? I want to maintain that we can fruitfully regard it as being so. For in so far as we remain concerned

with the play or the piece of music, what we are doing is in the nature of suggesting or arguing for alternative performances, which would have presented the original work differently: we are not suggesting or arguing for alternative ways in which the actual performance might be taken. Our interpretation is on the occasion of a performance, not about it. The situation is, of course, complicated to a degree that cannot be unravelled here by the fact that acting and playing music are also arts, and in criticising individual performances we are sometimes conversant about those arts: which is why I qualified my remark by saying "in so far as we remain concerned with the play or piece of music."

The second and more serious objection to the parallelism between the two kinds of interpretation is that they differ as to necessity. For whereas a tragedy or a string quartet have to be interpreted, a poem or a painting need not be. At any given moment it may be necessary to interpret them, but that will be only because of the historical incompleteness of our comprehension of the work. Once we have really grasped it, further interpretation will no longer be called for. In other words, critical interpretation ultimately eliminates itself: whereas a piece of music or a play cannot be performed once and for all.

On this last argument I wish to make two preliminary observations: First, the argument must not draw any support (as the formulation here would seem to) from the indubitable but irrelevant fact that a performance is a transient not an enduring phenomenon. The relevant fact is not that a piece of music or a play must always be performed anew but that it can always be performed afresh, i.e. that every new performance can involve a new interpretation. The question then is, Is there not in the case of the non-performing arts the same permanent possibility of new interpretation? Secondly, the argument seems to be ambiguous between two formulations, which are not clearly, though in fact they may be, equivalent: the ostensibly stronger one, that in the case of a poem or painting all interpretations can ultimately be eliminated; and the ostensibly weaker one, that in these cases all interpretations save one can ultimately be eliminated.

Against the eliminability of interpretation, the only decisive argument is one drawn from our actual experience of art. There are, however, supplementary considerations, the full force of which can be assessed only as this essay progresses, which relate to the value of art. Allusions to both can be found in a brilliant and suggestive work, Valéry's "Réflexions sur l'Art."

In the first place the value of art, as has been traditionally recognized, does not exist exclusively, or even primarily, for the artist. It is shared equally between the artist and his audience. One view of how this sharing is effected, which is prevalent but implausible, is that the artist makes something of value, which he then hands on to the audience, which is thereby enriched. Another view is that in art there is a characteristic ambiguity, or perhaps better plasticity, introduced into the roles of activity and passivity: the artist is active, but so also is the spectator, and the spectator's activity consists in interpretation. "A creator" Valéry puts it "is one who makes others create."

Secondly – and this point too has received some recognition – the value of art is not exhausted by what the artist, or even by what the artist and the spectator, gain from it: it is not contained by the transaction between them. The work of art itself has a residual value. In certain "subjectivist" views – as e.g. in the critical theory of I. A. Richards – the value of art is made to seem contingent: contingent, that is, upon there being found no better or more effective way in which certain experiences assessed to be valuable can be aroused in, or transmitted between, the minds of the artist and his audience. Now it is difficult to see how such a conclusion can be avoided if the work of art is held to be inherently exhaustible in interpretation. In section 29 the view was considered that works of art are translucent; the view we are now asked to consider would seem to suggest that they are transparent, and as such ultimately expendable or "throw-away." It is against such a view that Valéry argued that we should regard works of art as constituting "a new and impenetrable element" which is interposed between the artist and the spectator. The ineliminability of interpretation he characterises, provocatively, as "the creative misunderstanding."

Varieties of Art

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Ontology is concerned with the matter, mode, or manner in which things exist. If you ask, *Is it animal, vegetable, or mineral?* when trying to guess what item another person has in mind, your question is about the ontological character of that item.

This chapter is about the ontology of art. It considers the variety of forms in which art exists. Some kinds of art aim at spontaneous improvisation rather than the creation of works that persist and can be experienced on different occasions. Much jazz is of this kind. Nevertheless, the focus in this chapter will fall on the ontologies of *works* of art, since the vast majority of the arts package their output in works.

On its face, ontology is a dry and theoretical topic. The importance of ontological questions becomes apparent, however, when we rightly appreciate that they are crucial to locating and characterizing works of art. We have to be able successfully to pick out particular artworks and their contents before we can go on to analyze, describe, perform, appreciate, or evaluate them. These initial identifications inevitably involve assumptions about the manner in which the works in question exist and are constituted. Therefore, what we do and say about art presupposes ontological theories and commitments, whether we're aware of them or not.

The explicit consideration of ontological issues draws these decisive assumptions to the surface where they can be scrutinized and analyzed. A deeper understanding of art's nature isn't the only outcome. In the process we are faced by intriguing questions, such as *Do artworks exist eternally or are they created and, sometimes, destroyed? Does the identity of an artwork alter in response to its ongoing interpretation and reception?*

The position defended in this chapter builds on a key idea presented in chapter 3; namely, that an artwork's identity and contents are generated in part by relations it holds to aspects of the socio-historical setting in which it was created. Let us call this view *ontological contextualism*.

1 Artworks as Public Items

Many people would hold that artworks must be, or be present in, public objects or events, with the result that they can be experienced directly via the senses and can be the topics of interpersonally objective judgments. We must be able to point to artworks, thereby identifying them and at least some of their properties in a public fashion. Indeed, it's widely maintained that first-hand perceptual acquaintance with artworks is essential for their fullest appreciation. A person who experiences a work only indirectly – for example, who knows a painting only through others' descriptions or through photographic reproductions – isn't well situated to grasp all that is important about it as the artwork it is.

Despite these widely held intuitions, some philosophers – one example being R. G. Collingwood, an English philosopher who wrote in the 1930s – have maintained that artworks exist only in the private realm of the artist's mind. What the artist publicly produces isn't the artwork but a prop or trace that assists members of the audience to duplicate the work in their own minds.

This form of ontological idealism seems apt for the case in which a poet composes a poem in his head and never writes it down. Nevertheless, the position faces major difficulties and should be rejected. Like all forms of ontological idealism, this view can't easily explain how we successfully make interpersonal references to artworks and identifications of their contents, and it runs counter to the conviction that we can have direct perceptual access to the artist's work.

Similar difficulties accompany an alternative theory according to which the artwork is to be identified with the artist's actions, not with the product that results from these. (Versions of this position have been developed by the contemporary philosophers Gregory Currie and David Davies.) Though actions differ in principle from mental experiences by being directly observable by third parties, in practice this theory makes the work nearly as inaccessible as the previous one does. The artist's actions are very rarely observed by her artwork's audience. And while it's true that we appreciate what the artist has done and achieved, we also value the product that is made and the qualities it displays.

Rather than debating these views, we will assume that artworks are public objects (such as oil paintings) or are instanced in public objects or events (such as cast sculptures or musical performances), or are specified via public instructions or encodings (such as play scripts or digital files of art-photographs) from which presentations of the work can be generated. The work does not exist until an appropriate public object or event has been suitably authorized: the novel is written down, the score is notated, or the dance is presented as an exemplar or model. The work need not be offered to an audience. A finished painting would be an artwork even if it were destroyed by fire before anyone other than the artist viewed it, and many a symphony has remained unperformed. But it must be incarnated in a manner that is potentially perceptible.

To return to the earlier example of the poet, his work isn't given its definitive form until it is publicly recorded or spoken and signed off. While it remains in his head, he can always change it. (Even if he told himself it was finished, he could always revoke this decision at a later time.) In presenting the work publicly, he might simply "copy" what is already in his head, but equally, he might decide to modify that earlier inspiration. In any event, the completion of the work involves some act of potentially public authorization.

As was hinted above, the manner in which a work is to be publicly presented or specified depends on what kind it is. Works for performance are usually indicated via sets of work-determinative instructions issued to the work's potential performers. The play is finished when its script is finalized. Usually, works for performance can be performed many times, so long as the appropriate directives are followed.

Other works can be specified in an encoded form. The silkscreen used for printing, the negative of a photograph, or the electronic pattern on a CD are examples of encodings. Computer files, stored as machine code, can encode artwork photographs or novels, for example. We can also regard the celluloid print of a movie as an encoding. While the frames look like (small, frozen) bits of the movie, many of the movie's crucial properties, such as seemingly continuous movement, are not revealed by viewing the reel of film. The reel needs to be screened before the work is presented.

The work is presented when an encoding is decoded by an appropriate process – the inked or painted silkscreen is applied to paper in the required fashion – or by a device meeting the relevant conditions for accuracy and transmission – an industry-standard photo developer, CD player, computer CPU and screen, or movie projector. And if that process is repeatable, the work in question can have many instances.

Some other kinds of works are first delivered via exemplars. Indeed, this can be common for works for performance – dances, songs – created in oral traditions. Copies or clones of the exemplar instance the same work.

Yet other works, such as handmade paintings and carvings, are created through direct manipulation of the forms and features of physical objects. These artworks are singular.

Two ideas implicit in the claims just made are debated within the philosophy of art. It was assumed that the dependence of artworks on physical objects or events shows that they are created when the appropriate objects are made or events take place. Yet some philosophers maintain that artworks are eternal abstract patterns that are discovered (but not created) by artists. On this view, the physical objects or events artists create affect our access to the artwork, not its existence. The second assumption was that some artworks are singular while others, at least potentially, can have many instances. Some philosophers would maintain, by contrast, that all artworks are potentially multiple.

The following two sections defend both assumptions against those who would question them.

2 Are Artworks Created or Discovered?

It's plausible to conceive of works with multiple instances in terms of what their instances have in common, which can be regarded as a formal pattern. We might think of musical works as ordered combinations and sequences of notes. (Or, if the work does not always specify individual notes, for instance because it leaves it to the performer to vary or decorate the melody, we can consider it to be an ordered sequence of musical elements, including stylistically appropriate flourishes.) And we might think of a novel as an ordered word-sequence in a particular language. (Or, if the story isn't so specific as this, for instance because it survives translation into another language, we can view it as a structured sequence of narrative elements.)

For handmade, singular artworks, such as Michelangelo's *David* or Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, the pattern or form of the matter that constitutes the work is again crucial to its identity. *David* would be lost if the statue were reduced to shapeless rubble, though none of its constituent matter would have been destroyed.

Not surprisingly then, artworks have sometimes been regarded as purely formal patterns that are distinct from the physical items or events in which they are embodied or exemplified.

Formal patterns are abstract objects. Following the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, they are

generally regarded as eternal and indestructible. The formal pattern that we call a square did not suddenly come into existence at some datable moment and can't be sent out of existence, though particular, actual items exhibiting this form may be made at a given moment and destroyed at a later one. Formal patterns are not created by humans, but they can be discovered by them. That the DNA molecule inevitably takes the form of a double helix was a scientific discovery of the 1950s.

Now, if artworks are formal patterns, as was just suggested, they too are eternal and indestructible. Such a view – let us call it *ontological Platonism* – is defended by the American philosopher Peter Kivy in discussing musical works. Beethoven drew attention to a certain note-sequence when he composed his Fifth Symphony, but the pattern pre-existed his efforts and, since the artwork is the pattern, so did it. Beethoven discovered the artwork, he did not create it. And if all copies of his score were destroyed, along with everything else from which we could derive an accurate copy of the score, what is lost is our access to the work, though the existence of the work remains unaffected.

Extending this view, it could be suggested that Michelangelo's chiseling exposed the artwork that is the form exemplified in his statue of *David*, thereby making that pre-existing work available to the rest of us. Also, if the statue is destroyed, what is lost is our contact with the work, though the pattern that is the work remains untouched.

A defender of this view might continue: discovery can be no less context-dependent than creation. Perhaps only a particular person, acting under particular influences at a particular time, could make the discovery in question. It took the invention of the camera, of light-sensitive papers, and the rest, before anyone was in a position to discover photographic artworks. And it took someone with John Donne's sexual psychology, interest in the science of his period, and religious commitments to write the sonnets he discovered at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Plainly, this theory runs against the widely held intuitions that artists are creators and that artworks can be destroyed. We think of artists as creative, as free in their choices, and as makers, all in ways that discoverers are not. And if someone smashes the original molds and all the bronze

statues cast from them, we would judge her for having annihilated the work, not for hiding it from us. What she does seems very different from the private collector who denies everyone access to an artwork by keeping it always locked in a vault.

Apart from relying on the strength of these intuitions, how can the theory that artworks exist as eternal patterns be challenged?

Here is one argument. The theory attempts to explain our alarm at the destruction of the statue or painting on which the artist worked by suggesting that we react not because the pattern that is the work is damaged but, instead, because we lose access to it. This argument fails, however, because it isn't true that, when an oil painting such as Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* is destroyed, contact with the formal pattern it exemplifies is lost. Countless copies, drawings, and photographs of the original preserve the pattern of its form. Access to the formal pattern, which this theory equates with the work, isn't inhibited by the painting's obliteration, so there should be no cause for alarm should this occur.

3 Are all Artworks Potentially Multiple?

At this point, a defender of the theory might question the second of the assumptions listed above. She might accept that nothing is lost in this case, but go on to argue that this is because no artwork is singular, since formal patterns always can be multiply instantiated. We're wrong to be alarmed at the destruction of Leonardo's painting because the work he discovered has numerous other embodiments. Many duplicates are faulty or inaccurate, but copies that can't be perceptually distinguished from the original are equally legitimate as instances of the artwork. And if these survive the destruction of the particular painting on which he labored, the artwork isn't lost after all.

One response to this new proposal might complain that it is no less contrary to our intuitions than was the theory's initial version. We do accord a special status to the oil paintings and carved sculptures that come from the artist's hand, and this isn't merely because accurate duplicates are hard to make or because we attach a purely historical significance to the first of the items issuing from a production line.

Imagine that science comes up with a matter replicator. It copies any material object down to the atomic level. If a stone is placed in one of its boxes and the switch is flipped, a duplicate appears in the other (and the original stone is otherwise unaffected).

Now suppose the replicator is used to clone persons. It's doubtful that this would lead us to decide that persons are multiple after all. We are concerned with how they came to be and their histories, both up to the time when the cloning occurs and subsequently. We would regard the creation and history of the original person as distinguishing them from all the clones. Moreover, each clone would go on to have a distinctive history following the cloning process, and we're likely to be as interested in those differences as in the similarity that holds at the moment of cloning.

The same is probably true for art. If we could duplicate *Mona Lisa*, we're likely to be concerned to track the original and keep it separate from its clones, even if we judge that a clone isn't inferior to the original when the goal is art appreciation. Though we accept the clones as substituting for the original, this does not mean that we also agree that the identity of the artwork must have been transmitted to the clones. (If your child was duplicated in the replicator, would you be indifferent about which one you took home afterwards?) Our conceiving of such works as singular stems partly from a commitment to the idea that the history of production contributes to the identity of the item that is manufactured.

In any case, suppose we do feel a need to revise our concepts when faced with duplicates and lookalikes. What then takes place is a change in the concept, not a discovery that somehow the concept was that of a multiple work all along. In the absence of this technology, there is no reason to abandon our present ontological commitment to the singularity of hand-crafted paintings and hewn statues.

One aspect of this concern with the process of creation focuses on the medium used and the possibilities and challenges this presents to the maker, given the means of production. The idea that artworks are abstract patterns seems largely indifferent to the medium involved. The same formal pattern might be equally realizable in sponge cake, molten lava, and dead animals. Even if the

abstract pattern displays features restricting the media that would realize it – for instance, it has notes with trumpet-like qualities, or has the appearance of marble-like stuff – there is a world of difference between achieving this by dealing directly with the medium and by synthesizing something that presents only the outward appearance of the medium. It matters that the result is achieved by playing the trumpet or chipping away at marble, as against pushing a button on a pre-programmed sound synthesizer or matter replicator, even if the outcomes are sensorily equivalent.

Moreover, qualities of the medium are likely to become part of the artwork's content and message. A striking illustration is provided by works that self-destruct because of the nature of the media that constitute them, thereby making their ephemerality part of their point. Gustav Metzger, a German artist, produced self-destructive art in the 1960s, including plastic screens splashed with acid. He thought it was the art form most suited to the industrial age. More recently an English artist, Damien Hirst, has created works that contain dying butterflies and rotting meat. Sandy Skoglund, an American, has used 80 pounds of raw hamburger meat as the medium for *Spirituality in the Flesh*, a portrait of a seated woman. Her installation was made and photographed in one day and destroyed by her the next.

It's surely wrong to regard the artwork in these cases as an abstract pattern that presents merely the *look* of corroded plastic, flapping butterflies, or uncooked meat. Hirst's work must be understood as including still-living insects, not disembodied appearances. Though Skoglund goes to considerable lengths to disguise the meaty substrate of the portrait she creates, awareness of its medium is important to understanding and interpreting her work.

Arguments of the sort that have just been offered should remind the reader of views developed in chapter 3, where it was argued that an artwork's identifying properties and its content typically depend on relations tying it to aspects of the context in which it originated, including its title, genre, medium, and the like. That more general argument, which applies both to works that can have multiple instances (such as novels, songs, cast statues, and prints) and to singular pieces (such as oil paintings and carved statues), is directly relevant to the debate in hand.

It suggests that two items that are perceptually indistinguishable to a person who is unaware of their causal origin can differ in their identity and content. One might be an artwork, the other not. Or both might be artworks, but where one is a humorous, postmodern pastiche, the other is not.

To recall an earlier example, despite sharing the same text, Cervantes' and Menard's *Quixotes* display quite different artistic properties and meanings. The former is unselfconscious in its use of the contemporary idiom where the latter is a studied attempt at a historically dated style. And the latter contains allusions to nineteenth-century ideas that could not be present in Cervantes' seventeenth-century work.

If these earlier arguments are convincing, they prove fatal to the theory that artworks are abstract patterns. Cervantes' and Menard's *Quixotes* share the same linguistic pattern and, on this view, should both be instances of the same single work. But this can't be right, since they possess contrasting, context-dependent properties crucial to their art-relevant identity and content. If ontological contextualism succeeds, ontological Platonism can be rejected.

When we accept that artworks depend for their identity and content on relations enmeshing them within the art-historical and wider context in which they are produced, they can no longer be viewed merely as abstract, formal patterns existing in a pure, timeless realm. By virtue of the contextual ties that contribute to their identity, artworks are embedded in the concrete reality of the space-time world of objects and events. As such, they can be created and destroyed.

This isn't to deny that the formal patterns they present contribute significantly to their identity and content. But it is to insist that factors in addition to their abstract, formal ones are no less necessary to them being the artworks they are. Artworks are perhaps better thought of as designs than patterns. Designs are the products of intentional activity and decision.

How are designs, as opposed to mere patterns, subject to creation and potential destruction? Some philosophers have argued that a design is created along with its first instance, without pre-existing eternally, because it's shaped by human decisions. This seems plausible when we consider human artifacts, such as the half-hour situation comedy TV show, the board game Checkers, or the 1972 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray.

Others maintain that, as well as making decisions regarding the design of their works, the process by which artists create works includes indicating, projecting, or making normative what they do. In other words, the artist decides not only to select and draw attention to a design, but gives it a special salience and status by saying, in effect, *This, and this alone, is a well-formed instance of my artwork! Or Perform or copy this, if you wish to make a well-formed instance of my artwork!* In creating the work, the artist makes it the case that the appropriate design is deliberately selected and presented as her work.

The media and modes of its practical realization, not solely its design, are factors relevant to an artwork's identity. A late nineteenth-century violin sonata, for example, isn't solely a selected and shaped pattern of notes, because the means of sounding them (the violin), the genre (sonata), and the musico-historical setting (late nineteenth century) also contribute to its having properties relevant to its identity as the work it is.

In fact, all the considerations mentioned in chapter 3 as pertinent to a work's identity and content should be factored in. These included the work's genre, style, and medium, its creator's intentions, and the work's relation to the artist's body of works, to other works to which it refers or by which it is influenced, to the art-historical setting in which it originated, and to the wider social and political environment.

The creation or destruction of an artwork depends on the treatment of its identifying elements. As well as its pattern or form, these include properties that depend on relations connecting the piece to the context of its production.

4 Multiply Instanced Artworks

It was suggested earlier that some artworks, such as handmade paintings or sculptures, are singular. They are particulars. However much two oil paintings resemble each other, they must be different in their identities (though they might be related as members of a set, or in other ways).

Other artworks are multiple in their occurrence or presentation. Each of us might possess our own copy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan*. Two paperbacks, movie screenings, cast statues, or performances might be similar

precisely because they are instances or presentations of a single artwork.

How is the relation between a multiple work and its occurrences or presentations to be characterized? Some philosophers, Richard Wollheim being an example, describe the relation as that between a *type* and its *tokens*. (If you answer *Six* to the question *How many letters are there in the word "poorer"*? you are counting letter tokens. If you answer *Four*, you are counting letter types.) Other philosophers use different terminologies, writing of *kinds* and their *instances* or *classes* and their *members*.

We will not debate the differences between these various approaches. In what follows, there is reference to *works* and their *instances*, but that usage is intended to leave open the question of whether multiple works are types, kinds, or classes, and of what might hang on these distinctions. In terms of the earlier discussion, works are humanly created types, kinds, or classes of tradition-specific, media-specific, and genre-specific designs.

For some works with potentially many instances, the instances have to be very similar to each other if they are to qualify as faithful or undamaged. It's likely to be crucial to the accuracy of copies of a modern novel that they share the same word order, since the identity of this kind of work usually depends on the narrative it contains and the narrative, in turn, usually is specified at the level of a particular sequence of words or sentences. Similarly, two accurate copies of a movie should be (nearly) visually and aurally identical when screened under equivalent conditions.

In other cases, though, fully faithful instances of a work can differ markedly in their content or qualities. With works for performance, such disparities are often attributable to differences in the performers' interpretations. Two performances of Shakespeare's *King Lear* or of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony might offer contrasting interpretations. But divergence between accurate instances can be found also in some arts that do not involve performance. Two prints might come from the same woodblock or lithograph and yet be in different colors.

Where fully faithful instances of a work can vary markedly in their content or qualities, this is because the work underdetermines aspects or details displayed in its instances. This isn't to say that such works are incomplete. (The classical

Viennese composer Franz Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony is *incomplete* because he stopped before all the movements were written, but his "Great" C major symphony was *finished*, even if it's designed to allow for differing interpretations.) Rather, we should say that the identities of such works encompass certain parameters of indefiniteness. It is their nature to be vague in parts.

Their concrete realizations can't be vague in the relevant respects, however. Even if the authorized prints from a woodblock might be in any color, each print must be in some particular color or colors. The person who produces an instance of the work has the job of resolving its indefiniteness. Because there is more than one way of doing this legitimately, equally and ideally faithful instances of the work need not display all the same features or properties.

A further distinction in the ways multiple works of art exist should be noted. Some multiply instanced artworks, such as novels and poems, must have at least one instance. For these, the first instance serves as a template or exemplar the copying of which results in further instances. Other multiple artworks can exist with no instances. This is the case with an uncast bronze, an unprinted silkscreen, an unscreened movie, or an unperformed symphony or play. For some of these, the work is finalized when the mechanism for creating it – the mold, movie print, or silkscreen – is made. And for others that are for performance, the work comes into existence when an appropriate set of instructions addressed to performers – an authorized score or script – is produced.

It was just implied that modern movies are not works for performance. That might seem strange, given that movie actors do more or less the same kinds of things that stage performers do in live theater. Here is the explanation: movies are for screening, not performance. The movie is completed when the masterprint is finalized. That print and its subsequent clones encode the work. The work is presented when the celluloid print or digitized disk is screened in the usual fashion and in a theater of the appropriate kind. The movie's delivery is via a mechanical process, and the person who activates this process, the projectionist, isn't normally regarded as performing or interpreting the movie. (By contrast, silent movies that

were to be given a live musical accompaniment should be regarded as multi-media works that are for performance in part.)

Purely electronic musical compositions that are issued on disk are like modern movies. The disk contains an encoding of the work. The work is played when the disk is decoded on an industry-standard CD player and amplifier-speaker system. Such a work is for playback. The person who sets the machine going by pushing the play button isn't a performer or interpreter of the work that is sounded.

Movies and electronic musical works might be made without the assistance of actors or musicians. The cartoonist who draws and animates the movie, or the composer who works directly on her computer to generate the sound files that make up her work, are creators, not performers, of the works they produce. In other cases, though, actors or musicians are involved. Their contributions, which are filmed or taped, add to the process in which the work is created. Before the work is completed, those films and tapes are edited, intercut, mixed, and so on.

The movie star might be no less an actor than the person who plays Hamlet in the theater, and the two might prepare and present their roles in ways that are similar, but their contributions to the outcomes differ. Unlike the theater actor, the movie actor provides material from which the work is made. She does not interpret a work that is already finished.

The same comparison holds between the musician who performs Beethoven's "Moonlight" piano sonata live and her counterpart in the studio who plays material under the composer's direction that is recorded for inclusion in the composer's purely electronic composition. The former performs a finished work, while the latter contributes to a piece that, when completed, will be for playback, not performance.

5 New Works Based on Old Ones

These examples remind us that the materials from which artworks can be made include, as well as pigment, stone, notes, gestures, words, and the like, human artifacts with their own identities. For example, in 1912 Picasso and Georges Braque began experimenting with collage; that is, they

took parts of newspapers and other items and stuck them to the surfaces of their paintings, incorporating them into the works' overall content and design.

On some occasions, the artifacts appropriated or used by the artist are already works of art in their own right. For example, a movie can be based on a novel. Even if the movie faithfully follows all the dialog in the novel and remains true to all that it describes, what results isn't another instance of the novel but a new work. Because of the intimacy of their relation, this new work reflects on its source, and can be called an adaptation of it.

We could characterize movie remakes as similar. The movie *The 39 Steps* (based on a novel by John Buchan), was first directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1935 and subsequently redone by Ralph Thomas in 1959 and by Don Sharp in 1978. *The Ladykillers*, directed by Ethan and Joel Coen and released in 2004, is based on a comedy made by Ealing Studios in 1955. The remakes share the originals' stories and much else besides. Moreover, this is no accident, since the one movie is based on the other. Yet we are inclined to view the remakes as separate, though related, works, because they involve distinct groups of creators and production processes.

The original and remake, both based on the same story, can be compared to the case in which two artists paint the same model in more or less the same style. The two works will be intimately related, given their common source and creative circumstances, but they have distinct identities.

By contrast, when a movie is re-edited, as when the "director's cut" is released, or where the DVD includes deleted scenes and an alternative ending, we might prefer to talk of different *versions* of a single work.

Remakes are examples of a general practice: that of generating a new work from another by subjecting it to a change of medium. In the case of music, the result is called a *transcription* or *arrangement*. When J. S. Bach's music is electronically synthesized, a new but derivative work results. And if its instrumentation is essential to a symphony's identity, as was true by the mid-nineteenth century, an arrangement of the piece for piano produces a new but similar piece. Again, what is important is the change of medium, from an ensemble of different instruments played by a

large number of performers to a piano played by one person.

Of course, piano transcriptions of this kind were common in earlier times as a way of disseminating music to those who could not afford to attend concert halls and opera houses. Accordingly, the transcriber usually aimed to preserve the nature of the source work as accurately as the new medium permitted. But the approach of those who derive new artworks from older ones can be much freer than this, as when the goal is to create an entirely original piece.

Hiphop artists provide an interesting example. Earlier we noted that the person who operates her CD player isn't a performer in her own right, but that isn't also true of the hiphop DJ who scratches and samples others' recordings in producing his own songs. He is a performer-composer who appropriates the works of others in making his own. In doing so, he also transforms what in other contexts is merely a mechanical decoding device – namely, the record player – into a musical instrument that is performed on.

This isn't unlike the case of Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*, mentioned earlier. Duchamp created one work by appropriating the postcard image of another, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*. In the process he transformed the postcard into an artistic medium, where previously it was merely a way of recording or representing an artistic medium, that of oil painting.

Works of these kinds, because of their self-conscious intertextuality – that is, their deliberate reference to the source work via allusion, pastiche, quotation, caricature, homage, or whatever – potentially possess a rich and complex artistic significance.

6 The Ontological Variety of Works of Art

Another point to have emerged from the earlier discussion deserves to be highlighted. Works within a single artistic type can display considerable variety in their ontologies. Take music again. There can be improvised musical performance that isn't the performance of any work, as is the case with much jazz. There can be oral traditions in which works are conveyed by an exemplar that subsequently is copied. Folk music traditions are often like this, as is much rock. There are works

for performance that are specified not by a model instance that serves as a paradigm but by a notated score that has the function of prescribing to potential performers what they must do and achieve in order to instance the work. Classical works of Western music are notated and taught via notations.

Meanwhile, in traditions of liturgical chant that call for strict adherence to the model and reject ideas of interpretative freedom, faithful instances of the work resemble each other nearly as closely as copies of novels do. In other cases, a great deal of freedom for interpretation is allowed to the work's performer, and faithful performances can vary widely. Those who re-record rock songs can adopt this free approach. For instance, Tori Amos, Patti Smith, and the Muppets Barbershop Quartet have all produced "covers" that differ considerably from Nirvana's original *Smells like teen spirit*. And at the other end of the scale, there are computer-generated, electronic musical works that are for playback, not performance.

As well, there is a useful distinction to be drawn between musical works intended for *live* performance and ones for *studio* performance. These latter, which include most popular music, call for performances involving the kinds of electronic interventions, effects, and editing that depend on the electronic resources of the studio or recording suite, and the performance is issued on disk. Subsequent recordings of the same rock song result in disks that encode new performances of the same work.

The differences in what is normative in works for live and studio performances explains why a pop star might mime to her record, or rely on backup singers to do harmonies that on the disk were multi-tracked, while an opera singer cheats if she does not do all the singing the part requires of her.

Musical works, then, are not homogeneously of a single ontological type. Some performances are not of works. Some works are not for performance. Some works for performance are for live playing and others are not. Some works are "thin" in that they underdetermine many of the details of their faithful rendition, while others are "thick" with constitutive detail. An appreciation of what the composer has done and how, and what instead is due to the performer, if there is one, presupposes an

understanding of what ontological variety of music is in question.

Another useful illustration of the ontological variety among works in a single art form is provided by ballet. Some ballets seem to take their identity from the music composed for them. An example is Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, which has received many different choreographic treatments. The work's identity can't derive solely from the music, however. (After all, it's at least a necessary condition for something's being a ballet that dancers take part if the performance is to be complete.)

The importance of its choreography to the ballet's identity is apparent in other cases. One is that in which the music already has an established identity before it's appropriated for use in the ballet. An example is George Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco*, which is based on J. S. Bach's concerto for two violins in D minor, composed 200 years earlier. Another case is that in which the dancers' movements trigger the music as their bodies break electronic beams or their feet land on pressure plates. An example is *Variations V* by Merce Cunningham and John Cage. And a final illustration of the importance the choreography can have for the work's identity is that in which no music goes with the dance. *Moves*, by the American choreographer Jerome Robbins, is such a ballet.

There is a continuum, from ballets in which the music is fixed and notated while the choreography is open-ended, to ones in which it is the choreography that is fixed and notated while the range of possible musical accompaniments, including the silent one, is open-ended.

Ballet is a hybrid art form. It unites dance, mime, drama, living sculpture, costuming, décor, and music. Other hybrids include opera and musicals, which combine music, song, and drama. Also, most songs meld narrative and music, and many involve poetry as well. Within hybrids, there is considerable scope for ontological variation, depending on which elements dominate and in what fashion.

Even if we carefully work out the range of ontological types different art forms employ, puzzling and difficult cases are bound to remain. Some art forms are ontologically ambiguous. This is true of poetry, where there may be nothing to choose between reading the poem silently and speaking it as if one were its narrator or subject.

Taken one way, poems are a special form of literary narrative. Taken the other, they are dramatic works that are for performance. We should accept poetry's ambivalence, without trying to force it unnaturally to fit only one ontological category.

7 Is the Identity of an Artwork Fixed or Evolving?

In chapter 3 we saw that perceptually indistinguishable artworks can have different contents as a result of being created in different art-historical contexts. However, a question arises from the fact that artworks persist through time, which means that their ongoing cultural setting alters with history's ebb and flow. Is there reason to think that the work's context continues to affect its identity after its creation, with the result that it remains self-identical yet crucially altered? The idea has been defended by the American philosopher Joseph Margolis, for example.

Living things retain their identity though they change over time. An oak tree can be one and the same as a past acorn with which it shares few properties. A given person can, at different times, be young and blond and old and bald. So, does an artwork have an evolving identity, much as a living person does?

Some may do so. Gardens, supposing some qualify as artworks, are intended to change with the growth of the plants and the yearly cycle. These works change while retaining their basic identity because their media and constitutive elements are living. It's less plausible to suggest the same for other, inorganic artworks, however.

Like anything else that persists, artworks acquire new properties with the passage of time. They become older, more influential, interpreted in new ways, thought about by different people, banned, neglected, water-stained, digitized, sent into space, and whatever.

Consider, for example, Michelangelo's ceiling and Judgment Wall in the Sistine Chapel. Following the works' completion in 1512, clothing was painted over the loins of many of the naked figures. Moreover, centuries of candle smoke and pollution darkened the ceiling more than anyone realized. When the works were cleaned at the close of the twentieth century, the colors were so bright that critics questioned the

long-accepted judgment that it was Titian who was the master of color while Michelangelo was the master of form.

As well, changes to a work's social and art-historical context can be no less significant than its physical deterioration in making it difficult or impossible for the present audience to see it as the artist's contemporaries did. In viewing Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, we are not likely to forget that it is the most reproduced art image in history, worth a president's ransom, once shot at, and so on.

But there are ways of accounting for the acquisition of such properties without adopting the view that factors crucial to the work's identity alter after its initial creation, as we will see.

If the president of China sneezes, everything in the world permanently acquires a new property – that of having existed when the president of China sneezed – yet we would not see this as affecting each thing's identity. Some of a thing's properties are crucial to its identity but many are not. Changes in properties of this latter kind leave its identity unmodified. What matters, then, is whether changes in an artwork that are a consequence of events after its creation affect those of its characteristics that are central to its identity. The following argument denies that this is so.

Of course we can discount as irrelevant to a work's identity constant change in the number of sneezes through which it has existed. We can also discount other developments that come much nearer to home, as it were. The course of history may be one in which a particular work is influential, initially overrated, the culmination of a stylistic tradition, and the last of its kind. More generally, the significance of a work can be affected by its later treatment and reception. It can become an icon for some later period, be ignored, be revived, and fetch millions at auction.

But none of these are alterations to the kinds of properties that seem most relevant to its identity; namely, its creator, genre, time of creation, and content.

This isn't to deny that features relevant to a work's identity and present at its creation might not become appreciable until later. Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* uses techniques that anticipate postmodern developments in twentieth-century literature. His audience of 1759 did not know the future and, anyway, might

not have noticed aspects of the book that later seemed forward-looking, but the use of those techniques was present at the work's creation. Such properties are revealed by history, which is different from their having been acquired at an historical remove from the work's creation.

Suppose, though, that a work turns out to be the first of a trilogy. Doesn't the creation of the later two works affect the identity of the first? Not simply by following after it. Also needed is an intention on the part of the artist. But now suppose the intention to write a trilogy was not formed until some time after the completion of the first work. In that case, we might agree that its identity is changed, but this is possible only because certain actions artists perform can create uncertainty about when labor on the piece has come to its conclusion.

The nineteenth-century Austrian composer Anton Bruckner regularly revised and rewrote his symphonies after their first performance and publication. Perhaps he was changing their identity. Where there is an ambiguity among versions or uncertainty between various possible completion dates, there will be a corresponding lack of clarity about the work's identity. To allow this, though, is far from accepting as a general claim that events taking place long after the artist's death can change her work's identifying properties.

A final case to consider is that in which the work receives a critical interpretation that would have been impossible at the time of its creation. For example, the interpretation hinges on giving a word a meaning that it did not acquire until after the creation of the work in which the word is used. William Blake's phrase *dark satanic mills*, from his Preface to *Milton* of 1804, is interpreted in this way if it's read as referring to the textile mills of the British industrial revolution that came later in the nineteenth century.

Something similar appears to be true when Freudian psychoanalysis is applied to works that pre-date it, as when it is held that Hamlet hesitates because he is paralyzed by Oedipal guilt, or when Marxist or feminist interpretations are proposed for pre-nineteenth-century works. Such interpretations concern the works' content and imply that this has changed since the works' creation, because the theories the interpretations rely on were invented at a later time.

Different strategies of reply are appropriate to different examples. In some cases, we can say the work is misidentified and thereby misinterpreted. This is perhaps the best way to describe the industrial reading of Blake's phrase. In others, we can point out that the interpreter isn't in fact making claims about the work's content but, instead, is playing with the text; for example, by considering what it *might* mean.

And Freudian and Marxist interpretations may not be anachronistic if all that is implied is that earlier artists, who could be astute observers of human nature and social relations, recognized the outward signs of the syndromes and power structures that Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx later analyzed. After all, Sophocles authored the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* millennia before Freud came up with the theory of the Oedipus complex, partly on the basis of contemplating Sophocles' play.

According to a long-established philosophical maxim, we should not adopt a more profligate or exotic ontology than is necessary to account for the mode in which something exists. If we can explain the direction of an electrical current without positing the existence of green but invisible gremlins that direct all electronic traffic, then we should refrain from including gremlins of that sort in our ontology.

We can account for the manner of existence of works of art without resorting to the special kind of ontology that is used to explain the persistence through change of the identity of living creatures. So, if we accept the principle of keeping our ontologies as simple as possible, we should reject the position according to which changes in a work's socio-historical setting subsequent to its creation affect its identity-relevant features.

Applications and connections – musical recordings, the movie of the movie, the matter replicator

Jazz is an art of improvisation. But suppose one of Charlie Parker's saxophone solos is later notated. Does that result in the creation of a work of which he is the composer? Perhaps not. Not all musical notations have the purpose of specifying works. Some have a *descriptive*, not a *prescriptive*, function; their goal is to record what a musician did. For example, ethnomusicologists and folklorists

write down musical performances to preserve them and to document them for the purposes of analysis and description.

When Parker's solo is written down, what is notated is not a work but an improvisation. This isn't to deny that, in making up the music, Parker displays many of the skills of the composer. Nor is it to object if the suggestion is that his improvisations are "works of art." What is denied is that he composes a musical work, as we normally understand such things: namely, as compositions intended and created for repeated performances.

Parker could have intended to compose musical works and written them in an improvisatory way, while relying on the help of assistants who were skilled in the use of musical notation. Apparently, this is how John Lennon and Paul McCartney sometimes worked in creating their songs. What is claimed isn't that Parker could not compose, but that he did not. He did not intend to prescribe via his act of improvisation that others perform what he did.

In that case, what should we say about recordings of jazz? If the musicians intend their music to be evanescent, can it survive being canned? There is reason to think it will be damaged, if not killed. The difference between hearing the live performance and listening to the recording is like that between watching an exciting sporting event as it takes place and viewing a replay of the game when the watcher knows the outcome. In the live situation, the avid fan recognizes when a risky strategy has been put in place and the threats to which it is intended to respond, yet, like the coaches and players, can't yet know if it's to prove a tactical masterpiece or a dismal failure. By contrast, the viewer of the replay probably can't prevent herself interpreting earlier events in the game in light of what transpires later. This can be an appropriate way of listening to a symphony, say, since symphonies are intended to be heard on more than one occasion, but it's likely to corrupt the experience most apt in appreciating jazz.

Mention of recordings brings up a new issue, this time to do with works intended for live performance. When Johannes Brahms's Second Symphony is recorded in the studio, the musicians can make multiple takes that are later edited together; they need not begin at the beginning and end at the end, they can always redo a section that contains a mistake, and filters and other devices

modify the sound. Yet the work is intended for live performance, which requires continuous playing from the beginning to end without electronic manipulation of the output. Why do we count the recording as a performance of Brahms's work?

The quick answer is because we expect standards and practices to be followed that make it reasonable to hear the recording as a *simulation* of the live performance that would sound as it does. The correct number of musicians per part should be observed, large chunks (minutes rather than seconds) of the piece should be recorded in a single take, all the notes that make it onto the recording should have been played as written on the specified instruments, and the musicians should be capable of playing the piece to a professional standard in a live performance. Meanwhile, the editors and engineers should aim at verisimilitude to the sound made by such an orchestra under the acoustic conditions of a concert hall.

The standards and practices governing pop recordings are different. Such recordings typically present virtual performances rather than simulations of live ones, because they can be heard to make extensive use of multi- and back-tracking, mixing, filtering, and the rest. When musical works intended for live performance are subject to this kind of treatment in a recording – for instance, when Bach's pieces are electronically synthesized – the result is what was earlier called a *transcription*. It is a work that is new by virtue of how its medium differs from that of its source, but it is also a work that retains a close connection to, and reflects on, its model.

The recording of a musical work created for live performance can be compared to a film of a play that deliberately confines itself to presenting the action as it would appear on stage and avoids close-ups and the like. A movie of that sort might count not as a new piece but as a (simulated) performance of the play. As cinema, the film would be odd, though. It's liable to strike its viewer as boring, even as distractingly artificial.

A more cinematic approach would introduce close-ups, slow motion, flashbacks, pan and dolly shots, varied angles and perspectives, rapid editing with cross-dissolves, montage, and like effects. Also, the stage would be abandoned for appropriate locations or studio sets. The film of a play, then, would be like the film of a novel, that is, a separate but derived work.

If there is a continuum between the movie that presents a simulated performance of the play and the movie that presents a new but imitative work, can there be a clear boundary between the two? Perhaps there isn't. If the boundary is vague, cases that fall in the gray area will be ambiguous as to their genre, and perhaps also as to their ontology. (There is no harm in that!) But like other distinctions drawn within continuums, the majority of cases can be clear – like red versus orange, say – even if borderline ones are not.

Here is another issue that also raises questions about the ontological status of movies. Some people object to the colorization of movies made originally in black and white. Others, including the Canadian philosopher, James O. Young, defend the practice.

One argument used by Young is that the colorization of the movie amounts to what was called above a transcription of the original. The movie of the movie is analogous to the movie of the play or the movie of the novel. In other words, the colorized movie is a new and separate work.

The process of colorization isn't destructive of the black-and-white original. In this it differs from some other examples of the generation of new works from old ones. Francis Picabia painted over one of his most controversial works and called the new painting *The Fig-Leaf*. Robert Rauschenberg created *Erased de Kooning* by erasing a line-drawing by the older and then more famous artist. And the contemporary Australian artist Jet Armstrong spray-painted "crop circles" on two landscape paintings, retitled them, and displayed them as his own work. In this case, the original artist, John Bannon, threatened to take legal action.

Where its creation entails the destruction of another piece, we might not welcome the new work, especially if it is of lower merit. That concern isn't relevant to the debate about colorizing movies, however, because the process leaves all black-and-white prints of the movie unharmed.

So the defense of colorization continues as follows: the colorized movie is a new and different work from the original. Just as Duchamp took the image of *Mona Lisa* and created from it *L.H.O.O.Q.*, so the colorizer takes the images of the old movie and makes a new one. The original work isn't damaged, as was also true of *Mona Lisa* after Duchamp's creative act. So how can there be

a basis for objection? Indeed, should we not accept colorized movies as welcome additions to the temple of cinema?

The rhetorical questions just posed might be answered in various ways. We could allow that the colorized movie is a separate and related work but still identify resulting harms about which we might be concerned. In practice, given the policies of TV stations and video stores, the availability of the black-and-white movie is likely to be reduced. And there might be disrespect being shown to the artists responsible for the original. We might forgive Duchamp his cheek, given the wittiness of his work and how far removed from us Leonardo is, but we might not feel so well inclined toward colorizers, since their contribution isn't artistically clever and is driven by the industry's desire for profits.

A stronger line, though, would say the colorized print is a (defaced) version of the original, not a new and separate piece. The case for colorization is bound to be weakened if the process amounts to messing around with the work, not creating a new one.

Sometimes the prints of movies are damaged by wear and handling. They are scratched, frames may be missing, and so on. What a film-goer sees when a damaged print is screened is a defective version of the original movie. A critic of colorization might maintain that the same is true of the colorized version. The movie is altered for the worse, but not so much or in such a way that it undermines its identity as an instance of the original work.

Here is a situation where we must decide, if we can, whether the changes involved in colorizing a movie produce a new work or merely a version of the old one. We should ask, is the absence of color essential to the preservation of the movie's identity? If it is, the colorized movie is different piece. If it isn't, the colorized movie is merely a print of the original. On the second view, the colorized version is defective, just as a scratched print is, but it instances the same movie as the black-and-white print, not a new and different one.

There are films in which the absence of color is part of what makes it the movie it is. When they made *Raging Bull* and *Manhattan*, Martin Scorsese and Woody Allen deliberately rejected the option of color. It is reasonable to regard their decisions as affecting the works' identities. This

conclusion might not be warranted where all film stock is in black and white, however. Under those circumstances, black and white is a standard, not a variable, property of the medium. As a result, its use can't properly be interpreted as being intended to add content to the work. (Similarly, before the genres admitted other possibilities, no significance can be read into the two-dimensionality of paintings, or the sepia tone of old photographs.)

This isn't to deny that filmmakers are not guided in what they do by attributes of the medium. Usually they are sensitive to these and exploit them. Not only do they film in black and white, they film for it. (Similarly, a painter can exploit the flatness of the canvas in depicting some of the surfaces shown in the work. And a photographer can take account in organizing her photograph of how the sepia tone of the print affects the clarity of its formal arrangement, say.)

That the director takes account of the film's black-and-whiteness does not mean, however, that the film's medium becomes part of its content, as opposed to being what facilitates the realization of that content. And where the medium does not affect the content, it does not affect the work's identity. Black-and-whiteness is a defining property for one or more genres of film, but as such it does not contribute to the identities of the individual films that fall within those genres.

Against this it might be observed that changes in color can affect a film's mood and that a film's mood is among its contents. The color-tinted print might be less stark and somber in its emotional feel than the black-and-white original. This is true, but the inference that a change of mood completely undermines the print's status as an instance of the original movie isn't established. A scratchy or distorted soundtrack might affect the film's mood without destroying the identity of the print as an instance, albeit a less than ideal one, of the film. An alteration to the original's mood might count as a flaw in a colorized print, but not as one that disqualifies it from instancing the source movie.

And if we allow that a film can come in more than one version (black and white plus many possible colorized variants), it is plausible to consider the versions as analogous to performance interpretations, which certainly can differ in their expressive moods while instancing the same work.

Overall, it seems sensible to reject the defense of movie colorization that argues that the process results in a new work. Rather, the outcome is a version of the original film. That does not end the debate, which can continue by considering whether the change disfigures the original, or whether that matters. It might also be relevant to distinguish between movies that make a claim to be artworks and those that do not, to think about the impact of colorization on the availability of the original and perhaps also on the audience's appreciation of the history of cinema, to consider the motives both of movie-makers and colorizers, and to reflect on the degree of toleration we show to adaptations of movies for screening on commercial television. But this further debate would take us away from the ontological issues that here are our concern.

Let us return to the matter replicator that was discussed earlier. Previously we considered and rejected the idea that we mistakenly regard some artworks as singular only because we do not yet have the technology to produce such a machine. Here I want to raise another question. If a clone could substitute adequately for the original as the object of aesthetic appreciation, despite its very different origin, does this undermine the claim that artworks take their identity and content in part from the setting in which they are first produced?

It's plausible to answer *No*. The possibility of the replicator does not challenge the ontological contextualism discussed earlier, which privileges the art-historical setting in which the work was created over others that obtain later.

We already have equivalents of the replicator for some artworks. When considering the properties of an art photo, movie, or purely electronic musical composition, our focus is on when the negative or master was first made, not on when the particular print or disk we're viewing or hearing came into existence. It may be that new prints of Orson Welles's movie of 1941, *Citizen Kane*, were cloned from a master only last year, but that does not make the work a postmodern one. Where the replicating process is mechanical or automatic, we regard the copy as if it inherits the original's properties or provides for knowledge of them.

Faced with a clone of *Mona Lisa* and knowing it as such, still we "see" brush strokes, the artist's

way of treating light and shade, and so on, though we are aware that no brush or artist was involved in making the simulacra we are viewing. In other words, we treat the duplicate as a window allowing us direct access to the original.

After all, many people are content to view only the copy of Michelangelo's *David* that stands in Florence's Piazza della Signoria and would say they have seen Michelangelo's famous work, though they did not visit the nearby Accademia di Belle Arti where the original is housed. What they assume is that the copy gives them access to the original's features because it's a faithful copy.

The story of the matter replicator does not undermine the argument for ontological contextualism, but it does remind us that we might be prepared to treat copies as substituting for the original and its circumstances if the cloning process is faithful (and especially so if the cloning process is automatic).

Readings

For the view that artworks exist in the mind of the artist, see R. G. Collingwood's *The Principles of Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938). Gregory Currie, in *An Ontology of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1988), and David Davies, in *Art as Performance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), both argue that it's the artist's actions, not the product she makes, that is the artwork.

The thesis that musical works are pure sound structures that are discovered by composers is defended in Peter Kivy's "Platonism in Music," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 19 (1983), 109–29. See also Julian Dodd, *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For a contrary view, see Jerrold Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is," in *Music, Art, and Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 63–88 and Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performances* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001). John Andrew Fisher challenges the idea that musical works are discovered, not created, in "Discovery, Creation, and Musical Works," *JAAC* 49 (1991), 129–36.

The ontological variety of music is emphasized in Stephen Davies's "Ontologies of Musical Works," in *Themes in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 30–46.

Works of art are characterized as types in Richard Wollheim's *Art and its Objects* (2nd edn., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). They are described as norm kinds in Nicholas Wolterstorff's "Towards an Ontology of Artworks," *Noûs* 9 (1975), 115–42. The suggestion that types can be created, rather than existing as eternal abstractions, is defended by Robert Howell in "Types, Indicated and Initiated," *BJA* 42 (2002), 105–27.

Discussion of the ontologies specific to some particular varieties of art, apart from those already listed for music, are Robert Howell's "Ontology and the Nature of the Literary Work," *JAAC* 60 (2002), 67–79; Noël Carroll's "The Ontology of Mass Art," *JAAC* 55 (1997), 187–99, and his "Toward an Ontology of the Moving Image," in *Philosophy and Film*, edited by C. A. Freeland and T. Wartenberg (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 68–85; Dominic McIver Lopes's "The Ontology of Interactive Art," *JAE* 35:4 (2001), 65–81; Joel Snyder's "Photography and Ontology," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 19 (1983), 21–34; and Francis Sparshott's *A Measured Pace: Toward a Philosophical Understanding of the Arts of Dance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), ch. 19.

A rare discussion of hybrid art genres, such as collage, kinetic sculpture, mime, and opera, is found in Jerrold Levinson's "Hybrid Artforms," in his *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*, 26–36.

The special ontological status of recordings is considered in Theodore Gracyk's *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 1–37 and 228–32, where he argues that, in rock, the work is purely electronic. Also on this topic is John Andrew Fisher's "Rock 'n' Recording: The Ontological Complexity of Rock Music," in *Musical Worlds: New Directions in the Philosophy of Music*, edited by P. Alperson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), pp. 109–23 and Andrew Kania's "Making Tracks: The Ontology of Rock Music," *JAAC* 64 (2006), 401–14. Lee B. Brown argues, in "Phonography, Repetition and Spontaneity," *PL* 24 (2000), 111–25, that an appropriate experience of jazz's improvised freedom is lost to the person who listens to a recording.

For sympathetic presentation of the idea that the artwork changes its identifying properties after its creation as a result of its subsequent

interpretation see Graham McFee's "The Historicity of Art," *JAAC* 38 (1980), 307–24, and Joseph Margolis's "The 'Nature' of Interpretable Things," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 16 (1991), 226–48. And for a critical review of the thesis, see Jerrold Levinson's "Artworks and the Future," in his *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*, 179–214.

James O. Young argues that a new work is created when a black-and-white movie is colorized in "In Defense of Colorization," *BJA* 28 (1988), 368–72. For a good general discussion of issues raised by colorization, see Yuriko Saito's "Contemporary Aesthetic Issue: The Colorization Controversy," *JAЕ* 23:2 (1989), 21–31.

What a Musical Work Is

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What *exactly* did Beethoven compose? That is the question I will begin with. Well, for one, Beethoven composed a quintet for piano and winds (flute, oboe, clarinet, horn) in E-flat, Opus 16, in 1797. But what sort of thing is it, this quintet which was the outcome of Beethoven's creative activity? What does it consist in or of? Shall we say that Beethoven composed actual *sounds*? No, for sounds die out, but the quintet has endured. Did Beethoven compose a *score*? No, since many are familiar with Beethoven's composition who have had no contact with its score.¹

Philosophers have long been puzzled about the identity or nature of the art object in non-physical arts, e.g., music and literature. In these arts – unlike painting and sculpture – there is no particular physical “thing” that one can plausibly take to be the artwork itself. This puzzlement has sometimes led philosophers (e.g., Croce) to maintain that musical and literary works are purely mental – that they are in fact private intuitive experiences in the minds of composers and poets. But this does not seem likely, since experi-

ences can be neither played nor read nor heard. More generally, the Crocean view puts the objectivity of musical and literary works in dire peril – they become inaccessible and unsharable. Fortunately, however, there is a way of accepting the nonphysicality of such works without undermining their objectivity.

Those familiar with recent reflection on the ontological question for works of art will know of the widespread consensus that a musical work is in fact a variety of abstract object – to wit, a structural type or kind.² Instances of this type are to be found in the individual performances of the work. The type can be heard through its instances, and yet exists independently of its instances. I believe this to be basically correct. A piece of music is *some* sort of structural type, and as such is both nonphysical and publicly available. But *what* sort of type is it? I aim in this paper to say as precisely as I can what structural type it is that a musical work should be identified with.

The most natural and common proposal on this question is that a musical work is a *sound* structure – a structure, sequence, or pattern of sounds, pure and simple.³ My first objective will be to show that this proposal is deeply unsatisfactory, that a musical work is more than just a sound structure *per se*. I will do this by developing three different objections to the sound-structure view. In the course of developing these

objections, three requirements or desiderata for a more adequate view will emerge. The rightness – or at least plausibility – of those requirements will, I think, be apparent at that point. My second objective will then be to suggest a structural type that does satisfy the requirements, and thus can be identified with a musical work.⁴

At the outset, however, I should make clear that I am confining my inquiry to that paradigm of a musical work, the fully notated “classical” composition of Western culture, for example, Beethoven’s Quintet for piano and winds in E-flat, Opus 16. So when I speak of a “musical work” in this paper it should be understood that I am speaking only of these paradigm musical works, and thus that all claims herein regarding musical works are to be construed with this implicit restriction.

I

The first objection to the view that musical works are sound structures is this. If musical works were sound structures, then musical works could not, properly speaking, be created by their composers. For sound structures are types of a pure sort which exist at all times. This is apparent from the fact that they – and the individual component sound types⁵ that they comprise – can always have had instances.⁶ A sound event conforming to the sound structure of Beethoven’s Quintet, Opus 16 logically could have occurred in the Paleozoic era.⁷ Less contentiously, perhaps, such an event surely could have taken place in 1760 – ten years before Beethoven was born. But if that sound structure was capable of being *instantiated* then, it clearly must have *existed* at that time. Beethoven’s compositional activity was not necessary in order for a certain sound-structure type to exist. It was not necessary to the possibility of certain sound events occurring which would be instances of that structure. Sound structures *per se* are not created by being scored – they exist before any compositional activity. Sound structures predate their first instantiation or conception because they are possible of exemplification *before* that point.⁸ So, if composers truly create their works – i.e., bring them into existence – then musical works cannot be sound structures.

We can also defend the pre-existence of pure sound structures (i.e., existence prior to any instantiation or conception) in a somewhat different manner. We need only remind ourselves that purely sound structures are in effect mathematical objects – they are *sequences* of sets of sonic elements. (Sonic elements are such as pitches, timbres, durations, etc.) Now if the pre-existence of simple sonic element types be granted – and I think it must be – it follows automatically that all sets and all sequences of sets of these elements also pre-exist. Therefore pure sound structures are pre-existent. But if pure sound structures pre-exist, then it is not open for them to be objects of creational activity. So again, if composers are truly creators, their works cannot be pure sound structures.⁹

But why should we insist that composers truly create their compositions? Why is this a reasonable requirement? This question needs to be answered. A defense of the desideratum of true creation follows.

The main reason for holding to it is that it is one of the most firmly entrenched of our beliefs concerning art. There is probably no idea more central to thought about art than that it is an activity in which participants create things – these things being artworks. The whole tradition of art assumes art is creative in the strict sense, that it is a godlike activity in which the artist brings into being what did not exist beforehand – much as a demiurge forms a world out of inchoate matter. The notion that artists truly *add* to the world, in company with cake-bakers, house-builders, law-makers, and theory-constructors, is surely a deep-rooted idea that merits preservation if at all possible. The suggestion that some artists, composers in particular, instead merely *discover* or *select* for attention entities they have no hand in creating is so contrary to this basic intuition regarding artists and their works that we have a strong *prima facie* reason to reject it if we can. If it is possible to align musical works with indisputably creatable artworks such as paintings and sculptures, then it seems we should do so.

A second, closely related reason to preserve true creation vis-à-vis musical works is that some of the status, significance, and value we attach to musical composition derives from our belief in this. If we conceive of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as existing sempiternally, before

Beethoven's compositional act, a small part of the glory that surrounds Beethoven's composition of the piece seems to be removed. There is a special glow that envelops composers, as well as other artists, because we think of them as true creators. We marvel at a great piece of music *in part* because we marvel that, had its composer not engaged in a certain activity, the piece would (almost surely) not now exist; but it does exist, and we are grateful to the composer for precisely that. Ecclesiastes was wrong – there *are* ever some things new under the sun, musical compositions being among the most splendid of them – and splendid, at least in part, in virtue of this absolute newness.

Shall we then accept the creatability requirement as suggested? Before we do so a last qualm should be addressed. It is open for someone to admit the importance of musical composition being characterized by true creation and yet waive the creatability of works themselves. Such a person will point to entities associated with the compositional process which composers unequivocally bring into existence – e.g., thoughts, scores, performances – and claim that true creation need be extended no further. Now it is certainly true that these entities are strictly created, and we may also accord composers some recognition of their creativity in regard to these things. But the fact of the matter remains that *works* are the main items, the center and aim of the whole enterprise, and that since musical works are not identical with scores, performances, or thoughts,¹⁰ if those are the only things actually created, then much is lost. “Composers are true creators” acquires a hollow ring. Creation in music shrinks to an outer veneer with no inner core.

I propose then that a most adequate account of the musical work should satisfy the following requirement, that of *creatability*¹¹:

- (Cre) Musical works must be such that they do *not* exist prior to the composer's compositional activity, but are *brought into existence by* that activity.

II

The second objection to the view that musical works are sound structures is this. (1) If musical works were just sound structures, then, if two

distinct composers determine the same sound structure, they necessarily compose the same musical work. (2) But distinct composers determining the same sound structure in fact inevitably produce different musical works.¹² Therefore, musical works cannot be sound structures *simpliciter*. The rest of this section is devoted to supporting and elucidating the second premise of this argument.

Composers who produce identical scores in the same notational system with the same conventions of interpretation will determine the same sound structure. But the musical works they thereby compose will generally not be the same. The reason for this is that certain attributes of musical works are dependent on more than the sound structures contained. In particular, the aesthetic and artistic attributes of a piece of music are partly a function of, and must be gauged with reference to, the total musico-historical context in which the composer is situated while composing his piece. Since the musico-historical contexts of composing individuals are invariably different, then even if their works are identical in sound structure, they will differ widely in aesthetic and artistic attributes. But then, by Leibniz's law, the musical works themselves must be non-identical; if W_1 has any attribute that W_2 lacks, or *vice versa*, then $W_1 \neq W_2$.

I will not attempt to give a strict definition of musico-historical context, but will confine myself to pointing out a large part of what is involved in it. The total musico-historical context of a composer P at a time t can be said to include at least the following: (a) the whole of cultural, social, and political history prior to t ,¹³ (b) the whole of musical development up to t , (c) musical styles prevalent at t , (d) dominant musical influences at t , (e) musical activities of P 's contemporaries at t , (f) P 's apparent style at t , (g) P 's musical repertoire¹⁴ at t , (h) P 's oeuvre at t , (i) musical influences operating on P at t . These factors contributing to the total musico-historical context might be conveniently divided into two groups, a–d and e–i. The former, which we could call the *general* musico-historical context, consists of factors relevant to anyone's composing at t ; the latter, which we could call the *individual* musico-historical context, consists of factors relevant specifically to P 's composing at t . In any event, all these factors operate to differentiate aesthetically

or artistically musical works identical in sound structure, thus making it impossible to identify those works with their sound structures. I now provide several illustrations of this.¹⁵

(1) A work identical in sound structure with Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), but composed by Richard Strauss in 1897 would be aesthetically different from Schoenberg's work. Call it 'Pierrot Lunaire*'. As a Straussian work, *Pierrot Lunaire** would follow hard upon Brahms's *German Requiem*, would be contemporaneous with Debussy's *Nocturnes*, and would be taken as the next step in Strauss's development after *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. As such it would be more *bizarre*, more *upsetting*, more *anguished*, more *eerie* even than Schoenberg's work, since perceived against a musical tradition, a field of current styles, and an oeuvre with respect to which the musical characteristics of the sound structure involved in *Pierrot Lunaire* appear doubly extreme.¹⁶

(2) Mendelssohn's *Midsummer's Night Dream Overture* (1826) is admitted by all to be a highly *original* piece of music. Music of such elfin delicacy and feel for tone color had never before been written. But a score written in 1900 detailing the very same sound structure as is found in Mendelssohn's piece would clearly result in a work that was surpassingly *unoriginal*.

(3) Brahms's Piano Sonata Opus 2 (1852), an early work, is strongly *Liszt-influenced*, as any perceptive listener can discern. However, a work identical with it in sound structure, but written by Beethoven, could hardly have had the property of being *Liszt-influenced*. And it would have had a visionary quality that Brahms's piece does not have.

(4) The symphonies of Johann Stamitz (1717–57) are generally regarded as seminal works in the development of orchestral music. They employ many attention-getting devices novel for their time, one of which is known as the "Mannheim rocket" – essentially a loud ascending scale figure for unison strings. A symphony of Stamitz containing Mannheim rockets and the like is an *exciting* piece of music. But a piece written today which was identical in sound structure with one of Stamitz's symphonies, Mannheim rockets and all, would not be so much exciting as it would be exceedingly *funny*. Stamitz's symphony is to be heard in the context of Stamitz's

earlier works, the persistence of late Baroque style, the contemporary activities of the young Mozart, and the Napoleonic wars. "Modern Stamitz"'s symphony would be heard in the context of "Modern Stamitz"'s earlier works (which are probably dodecaphonic), the existence of aleatory and electronic music, the musical enterprises both of Pierre Boulez and of Elton John, and the threat of nuclear annihilation.

(5) One of the passages in Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943) satirizes Shostakovich's *Seventh Symphony* ("Leningrad") of 1941, whose bombast was apparently not to Bartok's liking. A theme from that symphony is quoted and commented on musically in an unmistakable manner. But notice that if Bartok had written the very same score in 1939, the work he would then have composed could not have had the same property of satirizing Shostakovich's *Seventh Symphony*. Nor would the work that would have resulted from *Shostakovich's* penning that score in 1943.

These examples should serve to convince the reader that there is always some aesthetic or artistic difference between structurally identical compositions in the offing in virtue of differing musico-historical contexts. Even small differences in musico-historical context – e.g., an extra work in *P's* oeuvre, a slight change in style dominant in *P's* milieu, some musical influence deleted from *P's* development as a composer – seem certain to induce some change in kind or degree in some aesthetic or artistic quality, however difficult it might be in such cases to pinpoint this change verbally.

For example, suppose there had been a composer (call him "Toenburg") in 1912 identical with Schoenberg in all musico-historical respects – e.g., birthdate, country, style, musical development, artistic intentions, etc., except that Toenburg had never written anything like *Verklarte Nacht* though he had in his oeuvre works structurally identical with everything else Schoenberg wrote before 1912. Now suppose simultaneously with Schoenberg he sketches the sound structure of *Pierrot Lunaire*. Toenburg has not produced the same musical work as Schoenberg, I maintain, if only because his work has a slightly different aesthetic/artistic content owing to the absence of a *Verklarte-Nacht-ish* piece in Toenburg's oeuvre. Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* is properly

heard with reference to Schoenberg's oeuvre in 1912, and Toenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with reference to Toenberg's oeuvre in 1912. One thus hears something in Schoenberg's piece by virtue of resonance with *Verklarte Nacht* that is not present in Toenberg's piece – perhaps a stronger reminiscence of Expressionist sighs?

Before formulating a second requirement of adequacy, as suggested by the fatal problem that contextual differentiation poses for the equation of musical works with pure sound structures, I must confront an objection that may be lurking in the wings. The objection in short is that the aesthetic and artistic differences I have been discussing are not really an obstacle to equating works and sound structures, because these supposed differences between *works* due to compositional context really just boil down to facts about their *composers*, and are not attributes of works at all. The objection is understandable, but I find it rather unconvincing for several reasons which I will briefly detail.

(1) Artistic and aesthetic attributions made of musical works are as direct and undisguised as attributions typically made of composers. It seems to be as straightforwardly true that the Eroica symphony is noble, bold, original, revolutionary, influenced by Haydn, and reflective of Beethoven's thoughts about Napoleon, as it is that Beethoven had certain personal qualities, was a genius, changed the course of Western music, studied with Haydn, and at one point idolized Napoleon. (2) Whereas we may admit some plausibility to reducing artistic attributions (e.g., 'original', 'influenced by Haydn') to attributes of persons, there is no plausibility in so reducing aesthetic attributions; it is absurd to maintain that "*W* is scintillating," for example, is just a way of saying "*W*'s composer is scintillating." (3) Finally, in the case of artistic attributions, not only do they appear as entrenched and legitimate as parallel attributions to composers, but, if anything, they often seem to be primary. Consider originality, for example, and imagine a composer and oeuvre that possess it. Surely the composer is original because *his* works are original; his works are not original because *he* is.

I thus propose a second requirement – that of *fine individuation* – to which any acceptable theory of the musical work should conform:

(Ind) Musical works must be such that composers composing in different musico-historical contexts¹⁷ who determine identical sound structures invariably compose distinct musical works.

III

The third objection to the view that musical works are sound structures is this. If musical works were simply sound structures, then they would not essentially involve any particular means of performance. But the paradigm musical works that we are investigating in this paper, e.g., Beethoven's Quintet Opus 16, clearly *do* involve quite specific means of performance, i.e., particular instruments, in an essential way. The instrumentation of musical works is an integral part of those works. So musical works cannot be simply sound structures *per se*. Arguments in defense of the claim that performance means are an essential component of musical works now follow.

(1) Composers do not describe pure sound patterns in qualitative terms, leaving their means of production undiscussed. Rather, what they directly specify are means of production, through which a pure sound pattern is indirectly indicated. The score of Beethoven's Quintet, Opus 16, is not a recipe for providing an instance of a sound pattern *per se*, in whatever way you might like. Rather, it instructs one to produce an instance of a certain sound pattern through carrying out certain operations on certain instruments. When Beethoven writes a middle C for the oboe, he has done more than require an oboe-like sound at a certain pitch – he has called for such a sound as emanating from that quaint reed we call an "oboe." The idea that composers of the last 300 years were generally engaged in composing pure sound patterns, to which they were usually kind enough to append suggestions as to how they might be realized, is highly implausible. Composers are familiar with tone colors only insofar as they are familiar with instruments that possess them. We do not find composers creating pure combinations of tone color, and then later searching about for instruments that can realize or approximate these aural canvases; it would obviously be pointless or at least frustrating to do

so. Composers often call for complex sounds that they have never heard before and can scarcely imagine – e.g., the sound of two trombones and three piccolos intoning middle C while four saxophones and five xylophones intone the C-sharp a half-step above; it is obvious here that what is primarily composed is not a pure untethered sound but an instrumental combination.¹⁸

(2) Scores are generally taken to be definitive of musical works, at least in conjunction with the conventions of notational interpretation assumed to be operative at the time of composition. It is hard to miss the fact that scores of musical works call for specific instruments in no uncertain terms. When we read in Beethoven's score the demand 'clarinet' (rather, 'Klarinett') we may wonder whether a clarinet of 1970 vintage and construction will do as well as one of 1800, but we have still been given a fairly definite idea of what sort of instrument is required. There is nothing in scores themselves that suggests that instrumental specifications are to be regarded as optional – any more than specifications of pitch, rhythm, or dynamics. Nor does the surrounding musical practice of the time encourage such a way of regarding them.¹⁹ If we are not to abandon the principle that properly understood scores have a central role in determining the identity of musical works, then we must insist that the Quintet, Op. 16, without a clarinet is not the same piece – even if all sound-structural characteristics (including timbre) are preserved. To feel free to disregard as prominent an aspect of scores as performing means is to leave it open for someone to disregard any aspect of a score he does not wish to conform to – e.g., tempo, accidentals, accents, articulation, harmony – and claim that one nevertheless has the same work.²⁰ The only way it seems one could justify regarding performing-means specifications as just optional features of scores is to simply *assume* that musical works are nothing but sound structures *per se*.

Consider a sound event aurally indistinguishable from a typical performance of Beethoven's Quintet Opus 16, but issuing from a versatile synthesizer, or perhaps a piano plus a set of newly designed wind instruments, two hundred in number, each capable of just two or three notes. If performance means were not an integral aspect of a musical work, then there would be no question that this sound event constitutes a perfor-

mance of Beethoven's Quintet Opus 16. But there is indeed such a question. It makes perfect sense to deny that it is such a performance on the grounds that the sounds heard did not derive from a piano and four standard woodwinds. We can count something as a performance of Beethoven's Quintet Opus 16 only if it involves the participation of the instruments for which the piece was written – or better – of the instruments that were written into the piece.

(3) To regard performing means as essential to musical works is to maintain that the sound structure of a work cannot be divorced from the instruments and voices through which that structure is fixed, and regarded as the work itself. The strongest reason why it cannot be so divorced is that the aesthetic content of a musical work is determined not only by its sound structure, and not only by its musico-historical context, but also in part by the actual means of production chosen for making that structure audible. The character of a musical composition, e.g., Beethoven's Quintet Opus 16 for piano and winds, is partly a function of how its sound structure relates to the potentialities of a certain instrument or set of instruments designated to produce that structure for audition. To assess that character correctly one must take cognizance not only of the qualitative nature of sounds heard but also of their source of origin. Musical compositions, by and large, have reasonably definite characters; that is to say, we can and do ascribe to them many fairly specific aesthetic qualities. But if prescribed performing forces were not intrinsic to musical compositions, then those compositions would not have the reasonably definite characters we clearly believe them to have. The determinateness of a work's aesthetic qualities is in peril if performing means are viewed as inessential so long as exact sound structure is preserved.

Consider a musical work *W* with specified performing means *M* which has some fairly specific aesthetic quality $\emptyset$. The sound structure of *W* as produced by different performing means *N*, however, will invariably strike us either as not $\emptyset$ at all, or else as $\emptyset$ to a greater or lesser degree than before. Therefore, if means of sound production are not regarded as an integral part of musical works, then *W* cannot be said determinately to have the attribute $\emptyset$. So if we wish to preserve a wide range of determinate aesthetic attributions,

we must recognize performing means to be an essential component of musical works. I now provide two illustrations of this point.²¹

(a) Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata is a sublime, craggy, and heaven-storming piece of music. The closing passages (marked by ascending chordal trills) are surely among the most imposing and awesome in all music. However, if we understand the very sounds of the Hammerklavier Sonata to originate from a full-range synthesizer, as opposed to a mere 88-key piano of metal, wood, and felt, it no longer seems so sublime, so craggy, so awesome. The aesthetic qualities of the Hammerklavier Sonata depend in part on the strain that its sound structure imposes on the sonic capabilities of the piano; if we are not hearing its sound structure *as* produced by a piano then we are not sensing this strain, and thus our assessment of aesthetic content is altered. The closing passages of the Hammerklavier are awesome in part because we seem to hear the piano bursting at the seams and its keyboard on the verge of exhaustion. On a 10-octave electronic synthesizer those passages do not have quite that quality, and a hearing of them with knowledge of source is an aesthetically different experience. The lesson here applies, I believe, to all musical works (of the paradigm sort). Their aesthetic attributes always depend, if not so dramatically, in part on the performing forces understood to belong to them.

(b) Consider a baroque concerto for two violins, such as Bach's Concerto in D minor, BWV1043. In such pieces one often finds a phrase (A) assigned to one violin, which is immediately followed by the *very same* phrase (B) assigned to the other violin. Now when one hears such passages *as* issuing from *two* violins (even if in a given performance there are no discernible differences between A and B in timbre or phrasing), a sense of question-and-answer, of relaxation and unhurriedness is communicated. But if one were to construe such passages as issuing from a *single* violin, that quality would be absent, and in its place the passages would assume a more emphatic, insistent, and repetitive cast.

(4) The dependence of aesthetic attributes on assumed or understood performing forces should now be apparent. The dependence of artistic attributes is even more plain. (a) Consider Paganini's Caprice Opus 1, No. 17. This piece

surely deserves and receives the attribution 'virtuosic'. But if we did not conceive of the Caprice No. 17 as essentially for the violin, as inherently a *violin piece* (and not just a *violin-sounding piece*), then it would not merit that attribution. For, as executed by a computer or by some novel string instrument using nonviolinistic technique, its sound structure might not be particularly difficult to get through. (b) Imagine a piece written for violin to be played in such a way that certain passages sound more like a flute than they do like a violin. Such a piece would surely be accounted *unusual*, and to some degree, *original* as well. Understood as a piece for violin and occasional flute, however, it might have nothing unusual or original about it at all. Retaining the sound structure while setting actual performance means adrift completely dissolves part of the piece's artistic import. (c) According to one respected critic, Beethoven in the Quintet Opus 16 was interested in solving problems of balance between piano and winds – a nominally incompatible array of instruments – and succeeded in his own individual way.²² It is not hard to agree with this assessment; thus, 'solves the problem of balance between piano and winds' is an attribution true of Beethoven's Quintet. It is difficult to see how this would be so if the Quintet is purely a sound structure, if piano and winds are not strictly part of the piece at all.²³

I thus propose a third requirement for any account of the musical work: *inclusion of performance means*:

- (Per) Musical works must be such that specific means of performance or sound production are integral to them.

IV

If musical works are not sound structures *simpliciter*, then what are they? The type that is a musical work must be capable of being created, must be individuated by context of composition, and must be inclusive of means of performance. The third desideratum is most easily met, and will be addressed first.

I propose that a musical work be taken to involve not only a pure sound structure, but also

a structure of performing means. If the sound structure of a piece is basically a sequence of sounds qualitatively defined, then the performing-means structure is a parallel sequence of performing means specified for realizing the sounds at each point. Thus a musical work consists of at least two structures. It is a compound or conjunction of a sound structure and a performing-means structure. This compound is itself just a more complex structure; call it an “S/PM” structure, for short.²⁴ Beethoven’s Opus 16 Quintet is at base an S/PM structure; the means of producing the sounds belonging to it are no more dispensable to its identity as a composition than the nature and order of those sounds themselves. This satisfies requirement (Per).

To satisfy the first and second requirements of adequacy we arrived at, it is necessary to realize that a musical work is not a structure of the *pure* sort at all, and thus not even a S/PM structure *simpliciter*. A S/PM structure is no more creatable or context-individuated than a sound structure is. I propose that we recognize a musical work to be a more complicated entity, namely this:

(MW) S/PM structure-as-indicated-by- X -at- t

where X is a particular person – the composer – and t is the time of composition. For the paradigmatic pieces we are concerned with, the composer typically indicates (fixes, determines, selects) an S/PM structure by creating a score. The *piece* he thereby composes is the S/PM structure-as-indicated by him on that occasion.

An S/PM structure-as-indicated-by- X -at- t , unlike an S/PM structure *simpliciter*, does not pre-exist the activity of composition and is thus capable of being created. When a composer θ composes a piece of music, he indicates an S/PM structure ψ , but he does not bring ψ into being. However, through the act of indicating ψ , he does bring into being something that did not previously exist – namely, ψ -as-indicated-by- θ -at- t_1 . Before the compositional act at t_1 , no relation obtains between θ and ψ . Composition establishes the relation of indication between θ and ψ . As a result of the compositional act, I suggest, the world contains a new entity, ψ -as-indicated-by- θ -at- t_1 . Let me call such entities *indicated structures*. And let me represent indicated structures

by expressions of form “S/PM* x * t .” It is important to realize that indicated structures are entities distinct from the pure structures *per se* from which they are derived. Thus, in particular, $\psi^*\theta^*t_1$ is *not* just the structure ψ with the accidental property of having been indicated by θ at t_1 – $\psi^*\theta^*t_1$ and ψ are strictly non-identical, though of course related. $\psi^*\theta^*t_1$, unlike ψ , can be and is created through θ ’s composing. Thus requirement (Cre) is satisfied.

Indicated structures also serve to satisfy our second requirement (Ind). If musical works are indicated structures of the sort we have suggested, then two such works, $\psi^*\theta^*t_1$ and $\alpha^*\phi^*t_2$ are identical iff (i) $\psi = \alpha$, (ii) $\theta = \phi$, and (iii) $t_1 = t_2$. But if musical works are necessarily distinct if composed either by different people or at different times, then it certainly follows that works composed in different musico-historical contexts will be distinct, since any difference of musico-historical context from one work to another can be traced to a difference of composer or time or both. Put otherwise, musico-historical context (as explained in section 11) is a function of time and person; given a time and person, musico-historical context is fixed. So requirement (Ind) is satisfied. That it is satisfied by our proposal with something to spare is a matter I will return to in section v. I now endeavor to increase the reader’s grasp of what indicated structures are.

Indicated structures are a different class of type from pure structures. Types of the latter class we may call *implicit* types, and those of the former class *initiated* types. *Implicit* types include all purely abstract structures that are not inconsistent, e.g., geometrical figures, family relationships, strings of words, series of moves in chess, ways of placing five balls in three bins, etc. By calling them “implicit types” I mean to suggest that their existence is implicitly granted when a general framework of possibilities is given. For example, given that there is space, there are all the possible configurations in space; given there is the game of chess, there are all the possible combinations of allowed moves. Sound structures *simpliciter* are clearly implicit types. Given that there are sounds of various kinds, then all possible patterns and sequences of those sounds must be granted existence immediately as well. For a sound structure, in company with all pure structures, is always capable of instantiation before the point at which it is noticed, recog-

nized, mentioned, or singled out. And thus its existence must predate that point. The same goes for a performance-means structure *simpliciter*. Given performing means (i.e., instruments) of various kinds, then all possible combinations and sequences of such means exist as well. The compound of these two, a sound/performance-means structure, thus of course also counts as an implicit type.

The other class of types, *initiated* types, are so called because they begin to exist only when they are initiated by an intentional human act of some kind. All those of interest can, I think, be construed as arising from an operation, like indication, performed upon a pure structure. Typically, this indication is effected by producing an exemplar of the structure involved, or a blueprint of it. In so indicating (or determining) the structure, the exemplar or blueprint inaugurates the type which is the *indicated* structure, the structure-as-indicated-by-*x*-at-*t*. All indicated structures are, perforce, initiated types.

Initiated types include such types as the Ford Thunderbird, the Lincoln penny, the hedgehog. The Ford Thunderbird is not simply a pure structure of metal, glass, and plastic. The pure structure that is embodied in the Thunderbird has existed *at least* since the invention of plastic (1870); there could certainly have been instances of it in 1900. But the Ford Thunderbird was created in 1957; so there could not have been instances of the Thunderbird in 1900. The Ford Thunderbird is an *initiated* type; it is a metal/glass/plastic structure-as-indicated (or determined) by the Ford Motor Company on such and such a date. It begins to exist as a result of an act of human indication or determination. The instances of this type are more than just instances of a pure structure – they are instances of an indicated structure. The Lincoln penny is similarly not a pure structure, an abstract pattern *tout court*, but a structure-as-indicated, a pattern-as-denominated-by-the-U.S. Government. Objects conforming to the pattern *tout court* but existing in 100 AD in Imperial Rome would not be instances of the Lincoln penny. Even the hedgehog is probably best understood, not as a pure biological structure, but rather as a biological structure-as-determined-or-fixed by natural terrestrial evolution at a particular point in history. The creatures we call “hedgehogs” possess a certain structure and stand in certain

causal relations to some particular creatures which came into existence at a given past date. The biological structure of the hedgehog might have been instantiated in the Mesozoic era, or on Uranus, but nothing existing at that time, or at that place, could be an instance of the hedgehog as we understand it. Musical works, as I have suggested, are indicated structures too, and thus types that do not already exist but must instead be initiated. The same is true of poems, plays, and novels – each of these is an entity more individual and temporally bound than the pure verbal structure embodied in it.

The distinction between indicated structure and pure structure can perhaps be made clearer by analogy with the distinction between sentence and statement long enshrined in the philosophy of language.²⁵ These distinctions are motivated in similar ways. Statements were recognized partly in response to the need for entities individuated in some respects more finely than sentences, in order to provide bearers for the varying truth values that turned up in connection with a given sentence on different occasions.²⁶ Just so, indicated structures are recognized in response to the need for entities more finely individuated than pure structures, in order to provide bearers for various incompatible sets of aesthetic, artistic, cultural, semantic, and genetic properties. We allow that a given sentence can make different statements when uttered in different circumstances. Similarly, we realize that a given sound/performance-means structure yields different indicated structures, or musical works, when indicated in different musico-historical contexts.²⁷

V

I have proposed that musical works be identified with rather specific indicated structures, in which a particular person and time figure ineliminably. The proposal MW was made, recall, in order to satisfy the creatability and individuation requirements. However, as I noted at that point, MW satisfies the individuation requirement with logical room to spare. Perhaps both requirements can be satisfied without invoking types that are quite so particularized? The obvious alternative is that a musical work is this sort of type:

(MW') S/PM structure-as-indicated-in-musico-historical-context-C

Such types would be both creatable and sufficiently individuated. A type of this sort, like an MW type, comes into existence through some *actual* indication of an S/PM structure by a person at a time – a person who at that certain time is situated in a particular context. But the type's identity is not inherently tied to that of any individual as such. Thus, two composers composing simultaneously but independently in the same musico-historical context who determine the same S/PM structure create *distinct* MW types, but the *same* MW' type.

Given these two proposals, then, which satisfy all our desiderata, do we have reason to prefer one or the other? I will discuss one consideration in favor of MW', and three considerations in favor of MW.

(1) On the MW' proposal, it is at least logically possible for a musical work to have been composed by a person other than the person who actually composed it. If *A* is the actual composer of a musical work, ψ -as-indicated-in- C_1 , then all we need imagine is that someone other than *A* was the person to first indicate the S/PM structure ψ in musico-historical context C_1 . On the MW proposal, however, it becomes *logically impossible* for a work to have been composed by other than its actual composer. Could someone else have composed Beethoven's Quintet Opus 16, according to MW? For example, could Hummel have done so? No, because if ψ is the S/PM structure of the Quintet Opus 16, then all that Hummel might have composed is ψ -as-indicated-by-Hummel-in-1797, and not ψ -as-indicated-by-Beethoven-in-1797.²⁸ It must be admitted to be somewhat counterintuitive for a theory to make the composer of a work essential to that work.

(2) We can turn this consequence upside-down, however. One might cite as a virtue of the MW proposal that it gives a composer *logical insurance* that his works are his very own, that no one else has or ever could compose a work identical to any of his. If *A*'s musical work is an MW type, then even a fellow composer situated in an identical musico-historical context determining the same S/PM structure composes a distinct musical work. It seems to me this is a desirable

consequence, from the point of view of preserving the uniqueness of compositional activity. Why should a composer have to fear, however abstractly, that his work is not exclusively his, any more than a painter painting a painting or a sculptor sculpting a sculpture need be troubled about whether his work is at least numerically distinct from anyone else's? Why not adopt a construal of 'musical work' (and of 'poem', 'novel', 'dance', etc.) which, while maintaining musical works as abstract types, guarantees this individuation by artist for them as well? Considerations (1) and (2) thus appear to fairly well cancel each other out.

(3) A more decisive reason, however, for ensuring by proposal MW that composers *A* and *B* who determine the same S/PM structure in the same musico-historical context yet compose distinct works W_1 and W_2 , is that, although W_1 and W_2 do not, it seems, differ structurally or aesthetically or artistically at the time of composition *t*, differences of an artistic sort are almost certain to develop after *t*. So, unless we wish to embrace the awkwardness of saying that two musical works can be identical when composed, but non-identical at some later point, we have a strong incentive to adopt MW. W_1 and W_2 will almost certainly diverge artistically because of the gross improbability that *A* and *B* will continue to be subject to the exact same influences to the same degree and that *A*'s and *B*'s oeuvres will continue to appear identical after the composition of W_1 and W_2 . If *A*'s and *B*'s artistic careers do exhibit these differences after *t*, then W_1 and W_2 will acquire somewhat different artistic significance, since W_1 will eventually be seen properly against *A*'s total development, and W_2 against *B*'s total development. W_1 may turn out to be a *seminal work*, whereas W_2 turns out to be a *false start*. Or W_1 may turn out to be *much more influential* than W_2 , owing to the fact that *A* comes to be much better known than *B*. In any case, there will be *some* divergence in artistic attributions, if not always so marked, unless *A* and *B* remain artistic duplicates of one another throughout their lives (and thereafter). Since circumstances subsequent to a work's composition are not comprised in musico-historical context of composition, proposal MW' leaves us open for the awkwardness mentioned above, MW forestalls this problem completely.²⁹

(4) A last consideration inclining us to MW comprises certain intuitions concerning what would count as a performance of what. It seems that, in order for a performance to be a performance of *W*, not only must it fit and be intended to fit the S/PM structure of *A*'s work *W*; there must also be some *connection*, more or less direct, between the sound event produced and *A*'s creative activity. Whether this is primarily an intentional or causal connection is a difficult question,³⁰ but, unless it is present, I think we are loath to say that *A*'s work has been performed. Consider two composers, Sterngrab and Grotesteen, who compose quartets with identical S/PM structures; suppose even that they share the same musico-historical context. Now imagine that the Aloysious Ensemble, who are great friends of Sterngrab, give the ill-attended première of Sterngrab's Quartet Opus 21. Clearly, the Aloysious have performed Sterngrab's Quartet Opus 21 – but have they also performed Grotesteen's Quartet Opus 21? I think not. Why? For several reasons: they don't know Grotesteen; they weren't using Grotesteen's scores; they didn't believe themselves to be presenting Grotesteen's work – in short, there was no connection between their performance and Grotesteen the creator. Grotesteen's creating his Opus 21 Quartet had nothing whatever to do with the sound event produced by the Aloysious Ensemble on the aforementioned occasion. Now, if Sterngrab's Quartet has performances that Grotesteen's does not, and *vice versa*, then, again by Leibniz's law, Sterngrab's and Grotesteen's quartets cannot be identical. On proposal MW', Sterngrab and Grotesteen have composed the same musical work; on proposal MW, their works are distinct. That MW squares with this intuition regarding identification of performances is thus one more point in its favor.

I therefore rest with the account of musical works represented by MW. In the next section I offer some remarks on performances and transcriptions in light of this account.

VI

(1) On my view, the following must all be distinguished: (a) instances of *W*; (b) instances of the sound structure of *W*; (c) instances of the S/

PM structure of *W*; (d) performances of *W*. An *instance* of a musical work *W* is a sound event which conforms *completely* to the sound/performance-means structure of *W* and which exhibits the required connection³¹ to the indicative activity wherein *W*'s composer *A* creates *W*. An instance of *W* is typically produced, either directly or indirectly, from a score that can be causally traced and is intentionally related by the performer, to the act of creation of *W* by *A*. Thus, all instances of *W* are instances of *W*'s sound structure, and instances of *W*'s S/PM structure – but the reverse is not the case.

Instances are a subclass of the set of performances of a work. A *performance* of a musical work *W* is a sound event which is *intended* to instantiate *W* – i.e., represents an attempt to exemplify *W*'s S/PM structure in accordance with *A*'s indication of it³² – and which *succeeds to a reasonable degree*.³³ Since one cannot instantiate a musical work – an S/PM structure-as-indicated-by-*X*-at-*t* – without intending to, because instantiating *that* demands conscious guidance by instructions, memories, or the like which one regards as deriving from *A*'s indicative act at *t*, it follows that the instances of *W* are all to be found among the performances of *W*. However, not all performances of *W* count as instances of *W*; many if not most attempts to exemplify S/PM structures fail by some margin. So these cannot count as instances of *W*, but they *are* performances – namely *incorrect* performances. (Of course, that they are strictly incorrect by no means entails that they are bad.) There are not, however, any incorrect *instances* of *W*; the *correct* performances of *W* are its instances, and no others.³⁴

Finally, let me note that musical works as I understand them *can* be heard in or through their performances. One *hears* an S/PM structure-as-indicated-by-*X*-at-*t* whenever one hears an instance of that S/PM structure produced by performers who, roughly speaking, are guided by *X*'s indication of the S/PM structure in question. And one *knows* precisely what musical work, i.e., structure-as-indicated, one is hearing if one knows what creative act is in effect the guiding source of the sound event being produced.

(2) On my view of what a musical work (of the paradigm sort) is, it follows immediately that a transcription of a musical work is a distinct

musical work, whether it involves alteration of the sound structure (the normal case), or *even* of just the performance-means structure. It is a virtue of my view that it gives a clear answer to this question, which is often thought to be only arbitrarily decidable. If we want such pieces to have the definite aesthetic qualities we take them to have, instrumentation must be considered inseparable from them. Thus, we need not rely, in endorsing the distinctness position on transcriptions vis-à-vis original works, merely on the principle of fidelity to the composer's intended instrumentation. Rather we are also constrained by higher-order considerations of preserving the aesthetic integrity of such pieces.

In conclusion, let me stress some obvious consequences of accepting the theory of the musical work that I have proposed. First, composers would retain the status of creator in the strictest sense. Second, musical composition would be revealed as necessarily personalized. Third, musical composition could not fail to be seen as a historically rooted activity whose products must be understood with reference to their points of origin. Fourth, it would be recognized that the pure sound structure of a musical work, while graspable in isolation, does not exhaust the work structurally, and thus that the underlying means of performance must be taken into account as well if the work is to be correctly assessed.³⁵

Notes

- 1 There are of course several other objections to these proposals, and to the Crocean proposal mentioned below. I do not mean to suggest that those I recall are clearly decisive by themselves.
- 2 See, for example, C. L. Stevenson, "On 'What Is a Poem?'," *Philosophical Review*, LXVI, 3 (July 1957): 329–62; J. Margolis, *The Language of Art and Art Criticism* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1965); R. Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).
- 3 It should be understood at the outset that sound structure includes not only pitches and rhythms, but also timbres, dynamics, accents – that is, all "purely aural" properties of sound.
- 4 The present paper owes a debt to two recent theories of the musical work: N. Wolterstorff, "Toward an Ontology of Artworks," *Noûs*, ix, 2 (May 1975): 115–42; and K. Walton, "The Presentation and Portrayal of Sound Patterns," *In Theory Only* (February 1977): 3–16. These writers are aware of some of the considerations that I adduce pointing to the complexity of a musical type. However, I believe they do not take them seriously enough, and thus are inclined to acquiesce in the view that musical works *are* or *may be* just sound structures. The present paper aims squarely to reject that view and to formulate one more adequate.
- 5 E.g., F# minor triad, three-note French-dotted rhythmic figure, middle C of bassoon timbre, etc.
- 6 This point is made by Wolterstorff, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
- 7 Though of course lack of suitable production facilities made this impossible in some nonlogical sense.
- 8 I am aware that someone might hold that in saying that a certain novel sound instance is possible at *t*, all we are committed to is that the sound structure of which it *would be* an instance might possibly *come into existence* at *t*, simultaneously with its first instance. But I do not think this a plausible view; in saying that a certain sound event could occur at *t* we are saying something stronger than that the structure it would exemplify might come into existence – we are saying that that structure is right then available.
- 9 Some who yet resist the idea that pure sound structures pre-exist compositional activity are possibly failing to distinguish between *structure* and *construction*. It is true that constructions need to have been constructed in order to exist; it does not follow that structures need to have been constructed – i.e., actually put together from parts – in order to exist. The Brooklyn Bridge is a construction, and embodies a structure. The Brooklyn Bridge did not exist before its construction. But the geometrical structure it embodies, which required and received no construction, has always existed.

Given that there will still be some who are attracted to the view that pure sound structures are in some way created by composers, presumably through mental activity, and that these are their works, I will take this occasion to point out briefly two untoward consequences of such a view. The first is that instances of pure sound structures can always have been sounded accidentally before any composer thinks them into existence by directing his attention on the realm of sounds. In which case we would then be countenancing compositions that have instances before those compositions begin to exist. The second is that a person who conceives or sketches a sound

structure new to him has no (logical) assurance that he has in fact composed *anything*. For if composing is bringing sound structures into existence, one may fail to do so in writing a score, provided someone else has conceived the same structure earlier. Notice that this is not a matter of the late-comer having composed the *same* work as his predecessor, but rather – what he and we would surely find incredible – a matter of his having composed *no* work at all.

- 10 Though composers compose their works *by* writing scores, having thoughts, or, less typically, producing performances.
- 11 It would be well to note here that, even if one rejects the requirement of creatability, abandonment of the sound-structure view in favor of something like the view I eventually propose will be demanded by the second and third requirements developed. And those requirements strike me as being nonnegotiable.
- 12 Notice that if we assume that composing musical works is strictly creating them, it follows immediately that two composers cannot compose the very same musical work (no matter what sound structures they determine) unless they are either composing jointly or composing independently but simultaneously. This is just a consequence of the fact that the same thing cannot be created both at *t* and at a later time *t'*. (The same goes for a single composer on temporally separate occasions; if composing is creating, a composer cannot compose the same work twice.) I will not, however, in this section assume that composing is strict creation.
- 13 Cf. J. L. Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" [in *Labyrinths* (New York: New Directions, 1962)] for a fictional demonstration of the dependence of artistic meaning on the historical context of creation.
- 14 Cf. Wollheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–54, for a discussion of the dependence of a work's expression on the artistic repertoire of the artist. The notion of "repertoire" is roughly that of a set of alternative decisions or choices within which an artist appears to be operating in creating his works. Wollheim extracts this idea from E. K. Gombrich's discussions of artistic expression in *Art and Illusion* and *Meditations on a Hobby-Horse*.
- 15 The convincingness of these examples depends crucially on accepting something like the following principle: "Works of art *truly* have those attributes which they *appear* to have when *correctly* perceived or regarded." I cannot provide a defense of this principle here, but it has been well argued for by C. Stevenson, "Interpretation and Evalua-

tion in Aesthetics" [in W. E. Kennick, *Art and Philosophy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1964)], and Walton, "Categories of Art," *Philosophical Review*, LXVI, 3 (July 1970): 334–67, among others.

- 16 It is a mistake to regard this illustration as concerned with what *Pierrot Lunaire* would have been like if it had been composed by Strauss. (I am not even sure what *that* supposition amounts to.) The illustration rather concerns a possible musical work that possesses the same sound structure as *Pierrot Lunaire*, but is composed by Strauss in 1897. This work would be distinct from *Pierrot Lunaire*, because aesthetically divergent. But if musical works were identified with sound structures it could *not* be distinct.

Another way of casting the argument using this example would be as follows. Consider a possible world *Q* in which both Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Strauss's *Pierrot Lunaire** exist, and call the sound structure they have in common "*K*." In *Q*, the works diverge aesthetically and hence are non-identical. Clearly, the works cannot both be identified with their common sound structure, but to so identify only one of them would be perfectly arbitrary. So in *Q*, *Pierrot Lunaire* ≠ *K*. But then in the actual world as well, *Pierrot Lunaire* ≠ *K*. Why? Owing to the necessity that attaches to identity and difference. If two things are non-identical in any possible world, they are non-identical in every possible world in which they exist. Put otherwise, statements of identity and difference involving rigid designators are necessary. 'Pierrot Lunaire' and '*K*' designate rigidly; they are proper names, not definite descriptions. Thus '*Pierrot Lunaire* ≠ *K*' is necessarily true, since true in *Q*. Therefore, in the actual world, *Pierrot Lunaire* ≠ *K*. [The argument can be recast in this way, *mutatis mutandis*, for illustrations (2)–(5) as well.]

- 17 This includes a single composer on separate occasions.
- 18 It is inevitable that someone will object at this point that certain composers, in certain periods, did not compose with definite instruments in mind and did not make specific instrumentation integral to their works. This may be true to some extent. But two points must be noted. First, I have set out to define the nature of the *paradigmatic* musical composition in Western culture, of which Beethoven's Quintet, Opus 16 is an example. It is enough for my purpose that most "classical" compositions, and effectively all from 1750 to the present, integrally involve quite definite means of performance. Second, even in a case such as J. S. Bach, where controversy has long existed as to

exactly what performing forces Bach intended, called for, or would have allowed in such compositions as *The Well-Tempered Clavier* or the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2, it is clear there are still more restrictions as to performing forces which must be considered part of those compositions. Thus, *The Well-Tempered Clavier* may not be a work belonging solely to the harpsichord (as opposed to the clavichord or fortepiano), but it is clearly a work for *keyboard*, and a performance of its sound structure on five violins would just for that reason not be a performance of *it*. And although the performance component of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 may be indeterminate between a trumpet and a natural horn in that prominent instrumental part, it certainly excludes the alto saxophone. Finally, a composition such as Bach's *Art of the Fugue*, for which perhaps no means of sound production are either prescribed or proscribed, is in this context merely the exception that proves the rule.

- 19 This should not be confounded with the fact that many composers were ready and willing to adapt their works in response to exigencies – in short, to license transcriptions.
- 20 This is not to say that *everything* found in scores is constitutive of musical works. Some markings do not fix the identity of a work but are instead of the nature of advice, inspiration, helpful instruction, etc. However, the suggestion that instrumental specifications are of this sort is totally insupportable.
- 21 Cf. Walton, "Categories of Art," op. cit., pp. 349/50, for related examples.
- 22 James Lyons, liner notes, phonograph record *Nonesuch* 71054.
- 23 The best one could say would be that the Quintet achieved a satisfactory blending of piano-ish sounds and woodwind-ish sounds.
- 24 One could alternatively speak of a single structure which, construed rightly, entails both the required sounds and the required means of sound production. This would be a structure of *performed sounds*, as opposed to "pure" sounds. For example, one such *performed sound* would correspond to the following specification: "Middle C of half-note duration played on oboe." Clearly this implies both a certain sound qualitatively defined and a means of producing it.

The main reason I favor the S/PM formulation is that it is more transparent. It preserves some continuity with the sound-structure view which it supersedes, and displays more clearly than the performed-sound formulation that, although a musical work is *more* than a sound structure, it most definitely *includes* a sound structure.

- 25 This analogy was brought to my attention by Warren Ingber.
- 26 See, for example, J. L. Austin's "Truth," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. xxiv (1950): 111–28.
- 27 The analogy might even be reversed, so as to illuminate the nature of statements. If musical works are structures-as-indicated . . . , then possibly statements just are: sentences-as-uttered . . .
- 28 I am assuming, of course, that Hummel could not possibly have *been* Beethoven. If he *could* have, then I suppose that, even on MW, Hummel might have composed Beethoven's Quintet.
- 29 I will take this opportunity to point out that although aesthetic and artistic attributes have played a large role in this paper, I have not insisted on them as *essential* to musical works, but only as relevant – in common with all other attributes – to *individuating* them. The argument has nowhere required as a premise that such attributes are essential attributes. It has assumed only that aesthetic/artistic attributes *truly belong* to works in a *reasonably determinate* fashion. As for what attributes *are* essential to musical works, given MW, it seems that certain structural and genetic attributes would have to be admitted: S/PM structure, composer, date of composition. But it is not obvious that aesthetic/artistic attributes will turn out to be essential, i.e., possessed by a work in all possible worlds it inhabits. Consider a possible world in which Schoenberg determines the S/PM structure of *Verklarte Nacht* during 1899 but in which Wagner had never existed. The resultant work might still be *Verklarte Nacht*, though some of its aesthetic/artistic attributes would be subtly different.
- 30 Quandaries arise when these considerations conflict, which I will not attempt to deal with here. For example, suppose the Aloysious Ensemble are actually reading copies of Grotesteen's score while believing themselves to be playing Sterngrab's score. Do they perform Sterngrab's Quartet, Grotesteen's Quartet, or both?
- 31 I will assume here that the required connection is primarily, if not wholly, intentional.
- 32 And thus an attempt to exemplify an S/PM-as-indicated-by-X-at-*t*.
- 33 What constitutes a "reasonable degree," and thus what differentiates poor or marginal performance from nonperformance, is for many compositions perhaps marked by the ability of an informed and sensitive listener to grasp, at least roughly, what S/PM structure is struggling to be presented. For example, even an especially informed and sensitive listener would grasp approximately nothing of the Hammerklavier Sonata from *my* attempt to

present its structure, since my facility at the piano is next to nil – no performance (much less an instance) of the Hammerklavier Sonata can issue from me or my ilk.

- 34 Thus I am in opposition to Wolterstorff's suggestion, in "Toward an Ontology of Artworks," op. cit., that musical works be construed as norm-kinds, i.e., as having correct and incorrect, or proper and improper, or standard and defective instances. What we say about musical works can, I think, be more perspicuously interpreted in terms of the distinction between instance and performance. Further, construing instance as requiring full conformity to score (i.e., as an all-or-none proposition) has the virtue, as Nelson Goodman pointed out in *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), of assuring preservation of a work's identity from work to instance and from instance to work. But by also distinguishing between instance and performance (which

Goodman does not do) one can sweeten the judgment, say, that Rubinstein's playing of the Chopin Ballade No. 3 with two mistakes is not an *instance* of the work, with the willing admission that it is surely a *performance* of it (and possibly a great one).

- 35 It is worth observing that, if the position developed in this paper is correct, it may have interesting implications not only for the identity of other sorts of art work (this I take to be obvious), but for the identity of abstract cultural objects of various sorts – e.g., scientific theories, speeches, laws, games. A physical theory, for example, can't be *simply* a set of sentences, propositions, or equations *if* it is in fact the possessor of properties such as brilliance, revolutionariness, derivativeness, immediate acceptance. For that very set of sentences, propositions, or equations might be found in another theory occurring fifty years earlier or later which lacked those properties.

Fictional Characters as Abstract Artifacts

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In the intuitive view initially presented, fictional characters are higher-level dependent entities, indeed entities dependent in a variety of ways on a variety of entities. We can now outline precisely what those dependencies are and see that, as a result of those dependencies, fictional characters turn out to be abstract artifacts, a kind of entity often encountered yet little acknowledged. To make their ontological status clearer, I begin by using the prior work on dependence to make the intuitive version of the artifactual theory more precise and then turn to investigate how such dependent entities fit into a general modal metaphysics.

Dependencies of Fictional Characters

The immediate dependencies of a fictional character are first, on the creative acts of its author or authors, and second, on a literary work. Clearly the dependence of a fictional character on the intentional acts of its creator or creators is a rigid historical dependence. Its historical dependence on certain forms of intentionality signals it as an artifact, an object created by the purposeful activity of humans (or other intelligent beings). We are certainly no strangers to artifacts; on the contrary

artifacts from computers to cutlery to couches are those entities that surround us most immediately in our everyday life. Yet little has been done to incorporate them into a philosophical ontology, perhaps in part because of fears that conditions for their identity would be too thorny, and in part because too little has been said about dependence on the thoughts and practices of human beings. Nonetheless, as artifacts fictional characters are importantly similar to other artifacts, and so working out the details of their identity conditions and dependencies may provide an inroad to a better understanding of artifacts generally.

The second immediate dependence of a fictional character is a generic constant dependence on some literary work about it – constant because a character exists only as long as some literary work about it remains, and generic because a character may be maintained by the presence of any one of many different literary works. Because dependence is transitive, a fictional character, in turn, is generically dependent on whatever supporting entities such a literary work requires. Literary works, like characters themselves, however, are multiply dependent entities. A literary work, like a fictional character, is rigidly historically dependent on the acts of its creator, but that does not exhaust its dependencies: It also depends on some copy or memory of it and on an audience capable of comprehending it. Because its dependence is not on any particular copy of it, but only on some copy or memory of it, a literary work is merely generically constantly dependent

on there being something with the relevant characteristics to count as a copy or memory of it; similarly, because no particular reader is required, the need for a competent readership is a merely generic constant dependence. The dependencies on literary works and authors exhaust the immediate dependencies of fictional characters, and the dependencies on authors, copies or memories, and a competent readership in turn exhaust the immediate dependencies of literary works. Naturally that may not be the end of the line regarding the ultimate dependencies of fictional characters if, as seems plausible, competent audiences and copies of a literary work in their turn depend on other sorts of entities.

On this conception, although fictional characters are artifacts, they are not concrete artifacts like tables and chairs. For despite their dependencies on ordinary entities like copies of texts and authors, fictional characters lack a spatiotemporal location and thus are abstract in that sense. As we can establish empirically, fictional characters do not occupy the locations they may be ascribed in literary works. Anyone who expected to find Sherlock Holmes at 221B Baker Street or anywhere else in the spatiotemporal manifold would be making a very naive mistake, indeed a category mistake, by expecting Holmes to be a spatiotemporal entity (a real man, perhaps) rather than a fictional character.

Apart from the locations they are ascribed, the only other obvious candidate for the spatiotemporal location of a fictional character is to say that it is "in" the literary work and so is wherever that work is. But where are literary works? Only a copy of the literary work, not the work itself, is in a particular location. A literary work is only generically dependent on some copy (or memory) of it. So although it may appear in various token copies, it cannot be identified with any of them because it may survive the destruction of any copy, provided there are more. Nor can it be classified as a scattered object present where all of its copies are, because the work itself does not undergo any change in size, weight, or location if some of its copies are destroyed or moved.

It would thus be wrong to locate fictional characters where copies of the literary works in which they appear are located, recited, or performed. We indeed say that fictional characters are "in" certain literary works, but describing

fictional characters as "here" in the work of literature is at best metaphorical. To take it literally would be to make two mistakes. First, it would be to mistake the abstract literary work, which has no spatiotemporal location, with its concrete copies, which do. Secondly, it would be to mistake a (token of a) description of a fictional character for the character itself. Token descriptions of characters may be located in copies of the literary work, but the fact that a description of some entity has a particular location in no way suggests that the entity is located there as well. Such a mistake would never be made if an actual person was described in a literary work: If Nixon is described in *All the President's Men* we certainly do not thereby locate Nixon, the man, wherever a copy of this text is.

But copies of the text are the closest concrete entities on which fictional characters constantly depend. If fictional characters were rigidly constantly dependent on some single spatiotemporal entity, we might have reason to locate them where that foundation is. Because they are not constantly dependent on any particular spatiotemporal entity, there is no reason to associate them with the spatiotemporal location of any of their supporting entities.

If fictional characters cannot be located either where they are said to be according to the story, or where copies of the literary works are located, in the absence of more plausible candidates it seems best to treat fictional characters simply as entities that lack a spatiotemporal location. Indeed this is just what we do in practice: Sophisticated readers treat fictional characters as lacking any spatiotemporal location, and thus as abstract in that sense. Thus fictional characters may, in brief, be characterized as a certain kind of abstract artifact.

Recognizing abstract artifacts requires going beyond a traditional one- or two-category ontology. Attempts are frequently made to posit only a one-category ontology of spatiotemporal particulars. The need for mathematical entities leads others to (sometimes grudgingly) acknowledge the additional category of platonistically conceived abstracta: Timeless, changeless entities that lack a spatiotemporal location. But fictional characters and other dependent abstracta do not fit into either such category. For although these entities are abstract in the sense of lacking a spatiotemporal

location, many of them depend on contingent entities and hence should not be characterized as necessary entities. Moreover, abstract artifacts are not timeless but instead are created at a particular time in particular circumstances, can change, and can once again cease to exist even after they have been created.

Fictional Characters in a Modal Metaphysics

One way of showing how this view works and why it provides a better analysis of fictional characters than possibilist or Meinongian abstractist accounts is to show how fictional characters, so conceived, would fit into a general modal metaphysics. A traditional modal metaphysics involves actual concrete entities and possible concrete entities; if abstracta are included they are generally said to occupy all possible worlds. There are three standard replies to the question of which possible worlds a fictional character occupies: The disbeliever's view that there are no fictional objects in the actual world or any possible world; the possibilist view that, because fictional characters are possibilities, they are in some merely possible worlds (but not the actual world); and the abstractist view that, as abstract objects, fictional characters are members of all possible worlds (including the actual world).

Unraveling the dependencies of fictional characters provides a different answer to the question of which possible worlds a character belongs to: Each of our familiar (actual) fictional characters is a member of the actual world and of those other possible worlds that also contain all of its requisite supporting entities. So, for example, those worlds without Shakespeare are also worlds without Hamlet, Macbeth, and the rest; those worlds with no Holmes stories are also worlds lacking Sherlock Holmes; and those worlds completely lacking conscious beings are worlds altogether devoid of fictional characters. Note that this solution relies on other actual entities themselves, such as authors and their creative acts, appearing in other worlds. Thus if one takes the view that no actual individuals, but only their counterparts, exist in other possible worlds, there are by the same token only counterpart fictional characters. Only if we allow that some of their

actual supporting entities appear in other worlds can we allow that actual fictional characters do so as well.

We can lay down more precise conditions for in which worlds a character is by examining the particular dependencies involved. Because a fictional character is rigidly dependent on its author for coming into existence, any possible world containing a given character as a member is a world containing that very author and his or her creative acts. Indeed we might add that because a character cannot exist before it is created by such acts, for any time and world containing a character, that world must contain the author's creative acts at that time or at some prior time. Because a fictional character constantly depends on the existence of a literary work about it, any world (and time) with a given character is also a world (and time) containing some literary work about it. But because a character may be maintained by two or more different literary works, it can appear in different literary works in different possible worlds, provided that its point of origin in the author's creative acts exists in that world, and that the literary works concerning the character may be traced back to it. So Holmes may be maintained by different literary works in different worlds: In some worlds only "The Five Orange Pips" may remain, in others only "A Scandal in Bohemia" may remain. In still other worlds in which Doyle wrote an additional Holmes story (not in the actual world), Sherlock may be maintained by that additional literary work even in the absence of the other literary works.

Assuming that an author's creative acts and a literary work about the character are also jointly sufficient for the fictional character, the character is present in *all and only* those worlds containing all of its requisite supporting entities. If any of these conditions is lacking, then the world does not contain the character, even if it may contain some of that character's foundations. If Doyle does not exist in some world, then Holmes is similarly absent. If there is a world in which Doyle's works were never translated and all of the speakers of English were killed off, leaving no one to understand or remember his works, then Sherlock Holmes also ceases to exist in that world, even if printed copies of Doyle's works remain. Or if, in some other world, Doyle's first work about Holmes was never published, leaving Doyle to give

up writing, destroy all copies of the manuscript, and keep his stories a secret, then as soon as Doyle's memory ceases in that world, so does Holmes.

Treating these characters as members of the actual world and (merely) some possible worlds readily enables us to account for the apparent truth of such claims as those that, although there is such a character as Sherlock Holmes, if Arthur Conan Doyle's medical practice had been busier, Holmes might have never been created. Other common answers to the question of which possible worlds a fictional character is in show no obvious means to account for basic truths like this. Disbelievers in fictional objects must consider the boredom of Doyle's practice of little advantage, for Sherlock exists just as little now as he would have if Doyle had never put pen to paper. Those who take fictional objects to be unactualized possibilia or necessary abstracta can take scarcely more interest in these favorable conditions, for in these views, the possible or abstract entity that is Holmes was around as much before being authored as after. Although the events of Holmes's life may have been chronicled by Doyle, this bears no more relevance to Holmes's existence than literary works about Richard Nixon bear to his. Both views can, at best, consider these entities to be picked out and written about at a certain time but cannot consider them to be created by the acts of their authors. The ability of the artifactual theory to account for this basic belief and for the truth of claims that characters might have never come into existence make it an appealing alternative.

Moreover, the artifactual theory also enables us to discuss under what conditions there might have been other fictional characters than those that there actually are. If there is a world in which Doyle abandoned the Holmes stories and turned to write romances about a hapless carpenter, we may say that it is possible that there is a fictional carpenter authored by Doyle, existing in those worlds in which he is created by Doyle and maintained by one or more of the possible romances. But that fictional carpenter in that other world remains a merely possible fictional character, not a possible carpenter. Anyone who wishes to maintain an ontological distinction between actual and possible entities will find this of advantage. For whereas in possibilist or abstractist

views, the two characters would share precisely the same ontological status, differing only in that Holmes alone is written about in the actual world (and hence is fictional there), in the artifactual theory one can treat Holmes and the carpenter as actual and possible entities respectively and thus respect the apparent ontological difference between those characters that are and those that only might have been.

Fictions and Other Dependent Abstracta

I have suggested that we take fictional characters not to be merely possible entities, nor necessary abstract entities, but rather to be dependent entities present in all and only those worlds in which they find their necessary support. This solution to the problem of the place of fictional objects in a modal metaphysics suggests the path to a different means of conceiving of the place of dependent abstracta generally in a possible-worlds ontology, a means that may be more appropriate for at least some kinds of abstracta, and that those with certain views about abstract entities might find congenial.

Often if abstracta are handled in a possible-worlds ontology they are treated as the occupants of *all* possible worlds – as ideal, necessary beings. But this seems odd for at least some kinds of abstract entities – entities like literary works and musical works. For these, like fictional characters, seem to be created entities, brought into being by their composer or author in particular historical and cultural circumstances, not discovered or picked out from an ever-present realm of ideal entities. Recognizing the category of dependent abstracta enables us to offer a better account of entities such as fictional characters, literary works, and musical works and enables us to account for them without needing to postulate the Platonist's ideal independent objects.

Viewing all abstracta as necessary beings would also be unattractive to those who view certain kinds of abstracta as dependent – for example, to those who take an *in rebus* view of universals, take a constructivist view of mathematical entities, or view certain ideas as the products of cultures or individual mental acts. For in such cases it would seem wrong to say that these entities are present in all possible worlds

regardless of whether they are instantiated, or whether or not they have been created.

Where fictional characters are concerned, I have argued that although they are abstract in the sense of lacking a particular spatiotemporal location, they are not members of all possible worlds but only belong to those worlds containing the entities on which they depend. This solution to the problem of which possible worlds a fictional character resides in comes as a direct consequence of their status as dependent entities. The same principle applies to other dependent entities of all types: They may be found in those possible worlds in which their supporting entities reside. Thus on an *in rebus* view of universals, the universal *being red* exists in precisely those worlds in which there is something red (for it depends on being instantiated). A musical work like a symphony might exist only in those worlds containing its creator and some performance of that work. A mathematical entity, on a constructivist view, might exist in only those worlds containing mental acts of the relevant type. Similarly, a culturally local idea might exist only where it has been developed through the relevant intentional acts of a community, and a law of state might exist only where it is enacted by a legitimate legislative power.

By following this method, one can allow possible worlds to vary in what abstract entities they contain as well as in what ordinary, spatiotemporal entities they have; there can be contingent, dependent abstracta indexed according to the

possible worlds in which their supporting entities reside. There are as many choices about precisely which worlds an abstract entity resides in as there are ways in which it can be, or fail to be, dependent.

Yet the suggestion that we postulate fictional objects under this conception, or any related dependent abstracta, is likely to be met with fear and resistance by many adhering to a one- or two-category ontology. There are two pressing worries that must be addressed before seriously considering admitting such entities into our ontology. One problem for those who postulate abstract entities of any kind is how we could refer to or acquire knowledge of these entities if they are not part of the causal order of spatiotemporal objects. A second problem to be addressed in considering fictional characters, or whenever we consider admitting entities of a different kind into our ontology, is whether we can offer straightforward identity conditions for them.

I turn now to showing how we may resolve these problems by treating fictional characters as relatively familiar entities connected by dependence relations to the everyday world around us. Finding clear solutions for fictional objects considered as dependent abstracta should not only help allay fears that fictional objects are too problematic to deal with but also pave the way for accepting dependence-based accounts of the ontological status of other cultural artifacts and dependent abstracta.

Aesthetic Concepts

Frank Sibley

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The remarks we make about works of art are of many kinds. In this paper I wish to distinguish between two broad groups. We say that a novel has a great number of characters and deals with life in a manufacturing town; that a painting uses pale colors, predominantly blues and greens, and has kneeling figures in the foreground; that the theme in a fugue is inverted at such a point and that there is a stretto at the close; that the action of a play takes place in the span of one day and that there is a reconciliation scene in the fifth act. Such remarks may be made by, and such features pointed out to, anyone with normal eyes, ears, and intelligence. On the other hand, we also say that a poem is tightly-knit or deeply moving; that a picture lacks balance, or has a certain serenity and repose, or that the grouping of the figures sets up an exciting tension; that the characters in a novel never really come to life, or that a certain episode strikes a false note. The making of such remarks as these requires the exercise of taste, perceptiveness, or sensitivity, of aesthetic discrimination or appreciation. Accordingly, when a word or expression is such that taste or perceptiveness is required in order to apply it, I shall call

it an *aesthetic* term or expression, and I shall, correspondingly, speak of *aesthetic* concepts or taste concepts.¹

Aesthetic terms span a great range of types and could be grouped into various kinds and sub-species. But it is not my present purpose to attempt any such grouping; I am interested in what they all have in common. Their almost endless variety is adequately displayed in the following list: *unified, balanced, integrated, lifeless, serene, somber, dynamic, powerful, vivid, delicate, moving, trite, sentimental, tragic*. The list of course is not limited to adjectives; expressions in artistic contexts like “telling contrast,” “sets up a tension,” “conveys a sense of,” or “holds it together” are equally good illustrations. It includes terms used by both layman and critic alike, as well as some which are mainly the property of professional critics and specialists.

I have gone for my examples of aesthetic expressions in the first place to critical and evaluative discourse about works of art because it is there particularly that they abound. But now I wish to widen the topic; we employ terms the use of which requires an exercise of taste not only when discussing the arts but quite liberally throughout discourse in everyday life. The examples given above are expressions which, appearing in critical contexts, most usually, if not invariably, have an aesthetic use; outside critical discourse the majority of them more frequently

have some other use unconnected with taste. But many expressions do double duty even in everyday discourse, sometimes being used as aesthetic expressions and sometimes not. Other words again, whether in artistic or daily discourse, function only or predominantly as aesthetic terms; of this kind are *graceful, delicate, dainty, handsome, comely, elegant, garish*. Finally, to make the contrast with all the preceding examples, there are many words which are seldom used as aesthetic terms at all: *red, noisy, brackish, clammy, square, docile, curved, evanescent, intelligent, faithful, derelict, tardy, freakish*.

Clearly, when we employ words as aesthetic terms we are often making and using metaphors, pressing into service words which do not primarily function in this manner. Certainly also, many words *have come* to be aesthetic terms by some kind of metaphorical transference. This is so with those like "dynamic," "melancholy," "balanced," "tightly-knit" which, except in artistic and critical writings, are not normally aesthetic terms. But the aesthetic vocabulary must not be thought wholly metaphorical. Many words, including the most common (*lovely, pretty, beautiful, dainty, graceful, elegant*), are certainly not being used metaphorically when employed as aesthetic terms, the very good reason being that this is their primary or only use, some of them having no current non-aesthetic uses. And though expressions like "dynamic," "balanced," and so forth *have come* by a metaphorical shift to be aesthetic terms, their employment in criticism can scarcely be said to be more than quasi-metaphorical. Having entered the language of art description and criticism as metaphors they are now standard vocabulary in that language.²

The expressions I am calling aesthetic terms form no small segment of our discourse. Often, it is true, people with normal intelligence and good eyesight and hearing lack, at least in some measure, the sensitivity required to apply them; a man need not be stupid or have poor eyesight to fail to see that something is graceful. Thus taste or sensitivity is somewhat more rare than certain other human capacities; people who exhibit a sensitivity both wide-ranging and refined are a minority. It is over the application of aesthetic terms too that, notoriously, disputes and differences sometimes go helplessly unsettled. But almost everybody is able to exercise taste to some

degree and in some matters. It is surprising therefore that aesthetic terms have been so largely neglected. They have received glancing treatment in the course of other aesthetic discussions; but as a broad category they have not received the direct attention they merit.

The foregoing has marked out the area I wish to discuss. One warning should perhaps be given. When I speak of taste in this paper, I shall not be dealing with questions which center upon expressions like "a matter of taste" (meaning, roughly, a matter of personal preference or liking). It is with an ability to *notice* or *discern* things that I am concerned.

I

In order to support our application of an aesthetic term, we often refer to features the mention of which involves other aesthetic terms: "it has an extraordinary vitality because of its free and vigorous style of drawing," "graceful in the smooth flow of its lines," "dainty because of the delicacy and harmony of its coloring." It is as normal to do this as it is to justify one mental epithet by other epithets of the same general type, *intelligent* by *ingenious, inventive, acute*, and so on. But often when we apply aesthetic terms, we explain why by referring to features which do *not* depend for their recognition upon an exercise of taste: "delicate because of its pastel shades and curving lines," or "it lacks balance because one group of figures is so far off to the left and is so brightly illuminated." When no explanation of this kind is offered, it is legitimate to ask or search for one. Finding a satisfactory answer may sometimes be difficult, but one cannot ordinarily reject the question. When we cannot ourselves quite say what non-aesthetic features make something delicate or unbalanced or powerful or moving, the good critic often puts his finger on something which strikes us as the right explanation. In short, aesthetic words apply ultimately because of, and aesthetic qualities ultimately depend upon, the presence of features which, like curving or angular lines, color contrasts, placing of masses, or speed of movement, are visible, audible, or otherwise discernible without any exercise of taste or sensibility. Whatever kind of dependence this is, and there are various relationships between aesthetic

qualities and non-aesthetic features, what I want to make clear in this section is that there are no non-aesthetic features which serve as *conditions* for applying aesthetic terms. Aesthetic or taste concepts are not in this respect condition-governed at all.

There is little temptation to suppose that aesthetic terms resemble words which, like "square," are applied in accordance with a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. For whereas each square is square in virtue of the *same* set of conditions, four equal sides and four right angles, aesthetic terms apply to widely varied objects; one thing is graceful because of these features, another because of those, and so on almost endlessly. In recent times philosophers have broken the spell of the strict necessary-and-sufficient model by showing that many everyday concepts are not of that type. Instead, they have described various other types of concepts which are governed only in a much looser way by conditions. However, since these newer models provide satisfactory accounts of many familiar concepts, it might plausibly be thought that aesthetic concepts are of some such kind and that they similarly are governed in some looser way by conditions. I want to argue that aesthetic concepts differ radically from any of these other concepts.

Amongst these concepts to which attention has recently been paid are those for which no *necessary* conditions can be provided, but for which there are a number of relevant features, A, B, C, D, E, such that the presence of some groups or combinations of these features is *sufficient* for the application of the concept. The list of relevant features may be an open one; that is, given A, B, C, D, E, we may not wish to close off the possible relevance of other unlisted features beyond E. Examples of such concepts might be "dilatatory," "discourteous," "possessive," "capricious," "prosperous," "intelligent" [...]. If we begin a list of features relevant to "intelligent" with, for example, ability to grasp and follow various kinds of instructions, ability to master facts and marshal evidence, ability to solve mathematical or chess problems, we might go on adding to this list almost indefinitely.

However, with concepts of this sort, although decisions may have to be made and judgment exercised, it is always possible to extract and state,

from cases which have *already* clearly been decided, the sets of features or conditions which were regarded as sufficient in those cases. These relevant features which I am calling conditions are, it should be noted, features which, though not sufficient *alone* and needing to be combined with other similar features, always carry some weight and can count only in one direction. Being a good chess player can count only *towards* and not *against* intelligence. Whereas mention of it may enter sensibly along with other remarks in expressions like "I say he is intelligent because ..." or "the reason I call him intelligent is that ...," it cannot be used to complete such negative expressions as "I say he is *unintelligent* because ..." But what I want particularly to emphasize about features which function as conditions for a term is that *some* group or set of them is sufficient fully to ensure or warrant the application of that term. An individual characterized by some of these features may not yet qualify to be called lazy or intelligent, and so on, beyond all question, but all that is needed is to add some further (indefinite) number of such characterizations and the point is reached where we have enough. There are individuals possessing a number of such features of whom one cannot deny, cannot but admit, that they are intelligent. We have left necessary-and-sufficient conditions behind, but we are still in the realm of conditions.

But aesthetic concepts are not condition-governed even in this way. There are no sufficient conditions, no non-aesthetic features such that the presence of some set or number of them will beyond question justify or warrant the application of an aesthetic term. It is impossible (barring certain limited exceptions [...]) to make any statements corresponding to those we can make for condition-governed words. We are able to say "If it is true he can do this, and that, and the other, then one just cannot deny that he is intelligent," or "if he does A, B, and C, I don't see how it can be denied that he is lazy," but we cannot make *any* general statement of the form "If the vase is pale pink, somewhat curving, lightly mottled, and so forth, it will be delicate, cannot but be delicate." Nor again can one say *any* such things here as "Being tall and thin is not enough *alone* to ensure that a vase is delicate, but if it is, for example, slightly curving and pale colored

(and so forth) as well, it cannot be denied that it is." Things may be described to us in non-aesthetic terms as fully as we please but we are not thereby put in the position of having to admit (or being unable to deny) that they are delicate or graceful or garish or exquisitely balanced.³

No doubt there are some respects in which aesthetic terms *are* governed by conditions or rules. For instance, it may be impossible that a thing should be garish if all its colors are pale pastels, or flamboyant if all its lines are straight. There may be, that is, descriptions using only non-aesthetic terms which are incompatible with descriptions employing certain aesthetic terms. If I am told that a painting in the next room consists solely of one or two bars of very pale blue and very pale grey set at right angles on a pale fawn ground, I can be sure that it cannot be fiery or garish or gaudy or flamboyant. A description of this sort may make certain aesthetic terms *inapplicable* or *inappropriate*; and if from this description I inferred that the picture was, or even might be, fiery or gaudy or flamboyant, this might be taken as showing a failure to understand these words. I do not wish to deny therefore that taste concepts may be governed *negatively* by conditions.⁴ What I am emphasizing is that they quite lack governing conditions of a sort many other concepts possess. Though on *seeing* the picture we might say, and rightly, that it is delicate or serene or restful or sickly or insipid, no *description* in non-aesthetic words permits us to claim that these or any other aesthetic terms must undeniably apply to it.

I have said that if an object is characterized *solely* by certain sorts of features this may count decisively against the possibility of applying to it certain aesthetic words. But of course the presence of just *a few* such features need not count decisively; other features may be enough to outweigh those which, on their own, would render the aesthetic term inapplicable. A painting might be garish even though much of its color is pale. These facts call attention to a further feature of taste concepts. One *can* find general features or descriptions which in some sense count in one direction only, *only for* or *only against* the application of certain aesthetic terms. Angularity, fatness, brightness, or intensity of color are typically not associated with delicacy or grace. Slimness, lightness, gentle curves, lack of intensity of

color are associated with delicacy, but not with flamboyance, majesty, grandeur, splendor or garishness. This is shown by the naturalness of saying, for example, that someone is graceful *because* she's so light, but *in spite of* being quite angular or heavily built; and by the corresponding oddity of saying that something is graceful *because* it is so heavy or angular, or delicate *because* of its bright and intense coloring. This may therefore sound quite similar to what I have said already about conditions. There are nevertheless very significant differences. Although there is this sense in which slimness, lightness, lack of intensity of color, and so on, count only towards, not against, delicacy, these features can be said, at best, to count only *typically* or *characteristically* towards delicacy; they do not count towards in the same sense as condition-features count towards laziness or intelligence.

One way of reinforcing this is to notice how features which are characteristically associated with one aesthetic term may also be similarly associated with other and rather different aesthetic terms. "Graceful" and "delicate" may be on the one hand sharply contrasted with terms like "violent," "grand," "fiery," "garish," or "massive" which have characteristic non-aesthetic features quite unlike those for "delicate" and "graceful." But on the other hand they may also be contrasted with aesthetic terms which stand much closer to them, like "flaccid," "weakly," "washed out," "lanky," "anaemic," "wan," "insipid"; and the range of features characteristic of *these* qualities, pale color, slimness, lightness, lack of angularity and sharp contrast, is virtually identical with the range for "delicate" and "graceful." Similarly many of the features typically associated with 'joyous,' 'fiery,' 'robust,' or 'dynamic' are identical with those associated with 'garish,' 'strident,' 'turbulent,' 'gaudy,' or 'chaotic.' Thus an object which is described very fully, but exclusively in terms of qualities characteristic of delicacy, may turn out on inspection to be not delicate at all, but anaemic or insipid. The failures of novices and the artistically inept prove that quite close similarity in point of line, color, or technique gives no assurance of gracefulness or delicacy. A failure and a success in the manner of Degas may be generally more alike, so far as their non-aesthetic features go, than either is like a successful Fragonard. But it is not necessary to go

even this far to make my main point. A painting which has only the kind of features one would associate with vigor and energy but which even so fails to be vigorous and energetic *need* not have some other character, need not be instead, say, strident or chaotic. It may fail to have any particular character whatever. It may employ bright colors, and the like, without being particularly lively and vigorous at all; but one may feel unable to describe it as chaotic or strident or garish either. It is, rather, simply lacking in character (though of course this too is an aesthetic judgment; taste is exercised also in seeing that the painting has no character).

There are of course many features which do not in these ways characteristically count for (or against) particular aesthetic qualities. One poem has strength and power because of the regularity of its meter and rhyme; another is monotonous and lacks drive and strength because of its regular meter and rhyme. We do not feel the need to switch from "because of" to "in spite of." However, I have concentrated upon features which are characteristically associated with aesthetic qualities because, if a case could be made for the view that taste concepts are condition-governed, these would seem to be the most promising candidates for governing conditions. But to say that features are associated only *characteristically* with an aesthetic term *is* to say that they are not conditions; no description however full, even in terms characteristic of gracefulness, puts it beyond question that something is graceful in the way a description may put it beyond question that someone is lazy or intelligent.

It is important to observe that I have not merely been claiming that no sufficient conditions can be stated for taste concepts. For if this were all, taste concepts might not be after all really different from one kind of concept recently discussed. They could be accommodated perhaps with those concepts which Professor H. L. A. Hart has called "defeasible"; it is a characteristic of defeasible concepts that we cannot state sufficient conditions for them because, for any sets we offer, there is always an (open) list of defeating conditions any of which might rule out the application of the concept. The most we can say schematically for a defeasible concept is that, for example, A, B, and C together are sufficient for the concept to apply *unless* some feature is present

which overrides or voids them. But, I want to emphasize, the very fact that we *can* say this sort of thing shows that we are still to that extent in the realm of conditions.⁵ The features governing defeasible concepts can ordinarily count only one way, *either* for or against. To take Hart's example, "offer" and "acceptance" can count only towards the existence of a valid contract, and fraudulent misrepresentation, duress, and lunacy can count only against. And even with defeasible concepts, if we are told that there are no voiding features present, we can know that some set of conditions or features, A, B, C, . . . , is enough, in this absence of voiding features, to ensure, for example, that there is a contract. The very notion of a defeasible concept seems to require that some group of features *would* be sufficient in the absence of overriding or voiding features. Defeasible concepts lack *sufficient* conditions then, but they are still, in the sense described, condition-governed. My claim about taste concepts is stronger; that they are not, except negatively, governed by conditions at all. We could not conclude, even if we were told of the absence of all "voiding" or uncharacteristic features (no angularities, and the like), that an object must certainly be graceful, however fully it was described to us as possessing features characteristic of gracefulness.

My arguments and illustrations so far have been rather simply schematic. Many concepts, including most of the examples I have used (*intelligent*, and so on [. . .]), are much more thoroughly open and complex than my illustrations suggest. Not only may there be an open list of relevant conditions; it may be impossible to give rules telling how many features from the list are needed for a sufficient set or in which combinations; impossible similarly to give rules covering the extent or degree to which such features need to be present in those combinations. Indeed, we may have to abandon as futile any attempt to describe conditions or formulate rules, and content ourselves with giving only some very general account of the concept, making reference to samples or cases or precedents. We cannot master or employ these concepts therefore simply by being equipped with lists of conditions, readily applicable procedures or sets of rules, however complex. For to exhibit a mastery of one of these concepts we must be able to go ahead and apply the word correctly to new individual cases, at

least to central ones; and each new case may be a uniquely different object, just as each intelligent child or student may differ from others in relevant features and exhibit a unique combination of kinds and degrees of achievement and ability. In dealing with these new cases mechanical rules and procedures would be useless; we have to exercise our judgment, guided by a complex set of examples and precedents. Here then there is a marked superficial similarity to aesthetic concepts. For in using aesthetic terms we learn from samples and examples, not rules, and we have to apply them, likewise, without guidance by rules or readily applicable procedures, to new and unique instances. Neither kind of concept admits of a "mechanical" employment.

Nevertheless it is at least noteworthy that in applying words like "lazy" or "intelligent" to new and unique instances we say that we are required to exercise *judgment*; it would be indeed odd to say that we are exercising *taste*. In exercising judgment we are called upon to weigh the pros and cons against each other, and perhaps sometimes to decide whether a quite new feature is to be counted as weighing on one side or on the other. But this goes to show that, though we may learn from and rely upon samples and precedents rather than a set of stated conditions, we are not out of the realm of general conditions and guiding principles. Samples and precedents necessarily embody, and are used by us to illustrate, the complex web of governing and relevant conditions. To profit by precedents we have to understand them; and we must argue consistently from case to case. This is the very function of precedents. Thus it is possible, even with these very loosely condition-governed concepts, to take clear or paradigm cases, to say "this is X because . . .," and follow it up with an account of features which clinch the matter.

Nothing like this is possible with aesthetic terms. Examples undoubtedly play a crucial role in giving us a grasp of these concepts; but we do not and cannot derive from these examples conditions and principles, however complex, which will guide us consistently and intelligibly in applying the terms to new cases. When, with a clear case of something which is in fact graceful or balanced or tightly-knit but which I have not seen, someone tells me why it is, what features make it so, it is always possible for me to wonder

whether, in spite of these features, it really is graceful, balanced, and so on.

The point I have argued may be reinforced in the following way. A man who failed to realize the nature of taste concepts, or someone who, knowing he lacked sensitivity in aesthetic matters, did not want to reveal this lack might by assiduous application and shrewd observation provide himself with some rules and generalizations; and by inductive procedures and intelligent guessing, he might frequently say the right things. But he could have no great confidence or certainty; a slight change in an object might at any time unpredictably ruin his calculations, and he might as easily have been wrong as right. No matter how careful he has been about working out a set of consistent principles and conditions, he is only in a position to think that the object is very possibly delicate. With concepts like *lazy*, *intelligent*, or *contract*, someone who intelligently formulated rules that led him aright appreciably often *would* thereby show the beginning of a grasp of those concepts; but the person we are considering is not even beginning to show an awareness of what delicacy is. Though he sometimes says the right thing, he has not seen, but guessed, that the object is delicate. However intelligent he might be, we could easily tell him wrongly that something was delicate and "explain" why without his being able to detect the deception. (I am ignoring complications now about negative conditions.) But if we did the same with, say, "intelligent" he could at least often uncover some incompatibility or other which would need explaining. In a world of beings like himself he would have no use for concepts like delicacy. As it is, these concepts would play a quite different role in his life. He would, for himself, have no more reason to choose tasteful objects, pictures, and so on, than a deaf man would to avoid noisy places. He could not be praised for exercising taste; at best his ingenuity and intelligence might come in for mention. In "appraising" pictures, statuettes, poems, he would be doing something quite different from what other people do when they exercise taste.

At this point I want to notice in passing that there are times when it may look as if an aesthetic word could be applied according to a rule. These cases vary in type; I shall mention only one. One might say, in using "delicate" of glassware

perhaps, that the thinner the glass, other things being equal, the more delicate it is. Similarly, with fabrics, furniture, and so on, there are perhaps times when the thinner or more smoothly finished or more highly polished something is, the more certainly some aesthetic term or other applies. On such occasions someone could formulate a rule and follow it in applying the word to a given range of articles. Now it may be that sometimes when this is so, the word being used is not really an aesthetic term at all; "delicate" applied to glass in this way may at times really mean no more than "thin" or "fragile." But this is certainly not always the case; people often *are* exercising taste even when they say that glass is very delicate because it is so thin, and know that it would be less so if thicker and more so if thinner. These instances where there appear to be rules are peripheral cases of the use of aesthetic terms. If someone did merely follow a rule we should not say he was exercising taste, and we should hesitate to admit that he had any real notion of delicacy until he satisfied us that he could discern it in other instances where no rule was available. In any event, these occasions when aesthetic words can be applied by rule are exceptional, not central or typical.⁶

It must not be thought that the impossibility of stating any conditions (other than negative) for the application of aesthetic terms results from an accidental poverty or lack of precision in language, or that it is simply a question of extreme complexity. It is true that words like "pink," "bluish," "curving," "mottled" do not permit of anything like a specific naming of each and every varied shade, curve, mottling, and blending. But if we were to give special names much more liberally than either we or even the specialists do (and no doubt there are limits beyond which we could not go), or even if, instead of names, we were to use vast numbers of specimens and samples of particular shades, shapes, mottlings, lines, and configurations, it would still be impossible, and for the same reasons, to supply any conditions.

We do indeed, in talking about a work of art, concern ourselves with its individual and specific features. We say that it is delicate not simply because it is in pale colors but because of *those* pale colors, that it is graceful not because its outline curves slightly but because of *that* particular curve. We use expressions like "because of

its pale coloring," "because of *the* flecks of bright blue," "because of *the* way the lines converge" where it is clear we are referring not to the presence of general features but to very specific and particular ones. But it is obvious that even with the help of precise names, or even samples and illustrations, of particular shades of color, contours and lines, any attempt to state conditions would be futile. After all, the very same feature, say a color or shape or line of a particular sort, which helps make one work may quite spoil another. "It would be quite delicate if it were not for that pale color there" may be said about the very color which is singled out in another picture as being largely responsible for its delicate quality. No doubt one way of putting this is to say that the features which make something delicate or graceful, and so on, are combined in a peculiar and unique way; that the aesthetic quality depends upon exactly this individual or unique combination of just these specific colors and shapes so that even a slight change might make all the difference. Nothing is to be achieved by trying to single out or separate features and generalizing about them.

I have now argued that taste concepts are not and cannot be condition- or rule-governed.⁷ Not to be so governed is one of their essential characteristics. In arguing this I first claimed in a general way that no non-aesthetic features are possible candidates for conditions, and then considered more particularly both the "characteristic" general features associated with aesthetic terms and the individual or specific features found in particular objects. I have not attempted to examine what relationship these individual features do bear to aesthetic qualities. An examination of the locutions we use when we refer to them in the course of explaining or supporting our application of an aesthetic term reinforces with linguistic evidence the fact that we are certainly not offering them as explanatory or justifying *conditions*. When we are asked why we say a certain person is lazy or intelligent or courageous, we are being asked in virtue of what we *call* him this; we reply with "because of the way he regularly leaves his work unfinished," or "because of the ease with which he handles such and such problems," and so on. But when we are asked to say why, in our opinion, a picture lacks balance or is somber in tone, or why a poem is moving

or tightly organized, we are doing a different kind of thing. We may use similar locutions: "his verse has strength and variety *because of the way* he handles the meter and employs the caesura," or "it is nobly austere *because of the lack of detail and the restricted palette*." But we can also express what we want to by using quite other expressions: "it is the handling of meter and caesura which is *responsible for* its strength and variety," "its nobly austere quality is *due to* the lack of detail and the use of a restricted palette," "its lack of balance *results from* the highlighting of the figures on the left," "those minor chords *make it* extremely moving," "those converging lines *give it* an extraordinary unity." These are locutions we cannot switch to with "lazy" or "intelligent"; to say what *makes* him lazy, what is *responsible for* his laziness, what it is *due to*, is to broach another question entirely.

One after another, in recent discussions, writers have insisted that aesthetic judgments are not "mechanical": "Critics do not formulate general standards and apply these mechanically to all, or to classes of, works of art." "Technical points can be settled rapidly, by the application of rules," but aesthetic questions "cannot be settled by any mechanical method." Instead, these writers on aesthetics have emphasized that there is no substitute for individual judgment" with its "spontaneity and speculation" and that "The final standard . . . [is] the judgment of personal taste."⁸ What is surprising is that, though such things have been repeated again and again, no one seems to have said what is meant by "taste" or by the word "mechanical." There are many judgments besides those requiring taste which demand "spontaneity" and "individual judgment" and are not "mechanical." Without a detailed comparison we cannot see in what particular way *aesthetic* judgments are not "mechanical," or how they differ from those other judgments, nor can we begin to specify what taste is. This I have attempted. It is a characteristic and essential feature of judgments which employ an aesthetic term that they cannot be made by appealing, in the sense explained, to conditions.⁹ This, I believe, is a logical feature of aesthetic or taste judgments in general, though I have argued it here only as regards the more restricted range of judgments which employ aesthetic terms. It is part of what "taste" means.

II

A great deal of work remains to be done on taste concepts. In the remainder of this paper I shall offer some further suggestions which may help towards an understanding of them.

The realization that aesthetic concepts are not governed by conditions is likely to give rise to puzzlement over how we manage to apply the words in our aesthetic vocabulary. If we are not following rules and there are no conditions to appeal to, how are we to know when they are applicable? One very natural way to counter this question is to point out that some other sorts of concepts also are not condition-governed. We do not apply simple color words by following rules or in accordance with principles. We see that the book is red by looking, just as we tell that the tea is sweet by tasting it. So too, it might be said, we just see (or fail to see) that things are delicate, balanced, and the like. This kind of comparison between the exercise of taste and the use of the five senses is indeed familiar; our use of the word "taste" itself shows that the comparison is age-old and very natural. Yet whatever the similarities, there are great dissimilarities too. A careful comparison cannot be attempted here though it would be valuable; but certain differences stand out, and writers who have emphasized that aesthetic judgments are not "mechanical" have sometimes dwelt on and been puzzled by them.

In the first place, while our ability to discern aesthetic features is dependent upon our possession of good eyesight, hearing, and so on, people normally endowed with senses and understanding may nevertheless fail to discern them. "Those who listen to a concert, walk round a gallery, read a poem may have roughly similar sense perceptions, but some get a great deal more than others," Miss Macdonald says; but she adds that she is "puzzled by this feature 'in the object' which can be seen only by a specially qualified observer" and asks, "What is this 'something more'?"¹⁰

It is this difference between aesthetic and perceptual qualities which in part leads to the view that "works of art are esoteric objects . . . not simple objects of sense perception."¹¹ But there is no good reason for calling an object esoteric simply because we discern aesthetic qualities in it. The *objects* to which we apply aesthetic words

are of the most diverse kinds and by no means esoteric: people and buildings, flowers and gardens, vases and furniture, as well as poems and music. Nor does there seem any good reason for calling the *qualities* themselves esoteric. It is true that someone with perfect eyes or ears might miss them, but we do after all say we *observe* or *notice* them ("Did you notice how very graceful she was?", "Did you observe the exquisite balance in all his pictures?"). In fact, they are very familiar indeed. We learn while quite young to use many aesthetic words, though they are, as one might expect from their dependence upon our ability to see, hear, distinguish colors, and the like, not the earliest words we learn; and our mastery and sophistication in using them develop along with the rest of our vocabulary. They are not rarities; some ranges of them are in regular use in everyday discourse.

The second notable difference between the exercise of taste and the use of the five senses lies in the way we support those judgments in which aesthetic concepts are employed. Although we use these concepts without rules or conditions, we do defend or support our judgments, and convince others of their rightness, by talking; "disputation about art is not futile," as Miss Macdonald says, for critics do "attempt a certain kind of explanation of works of art with the object of establishing correct judgments."¹² Thus even though this disputation does not consist in "deductive or inductive inference" or "reasoning," its occurrence is enough to show how very different these judgments are from those of a simple perceptual sort.

Now the critic's talk, it is clear, frequently consists in mentioning or pointing out the features, including easily discernible non-aesthetic ones, upon which the aesthetic qualities depend. But the puzzling question remains how, by mentioning these features, the critic is thereby justifying or supporting his judgments. To this question a number of recent writers have given an answer. Stuart Hampshire, for example, says that "One engages in aesthetic discussion for the sake of what one might see on the way . . . if one has been brought to see what there is to be seen in the object, the purpose of discussion is achieved . . . The point is to bring people to see these features."¹³ The critic's talk, that is, often serves to support his judgments in a special way;

it gets us to *see* what he has seen, namely, the aesthetic qualities of the object. But even when it is agreed that this is one of the main things that critics do, puzzlement tends to break out again over *how* they do it. How is it that by talking about features of the work (largely non-aesthetic ones) we can manage to bring others to see what they had not seen? "What sort of endowment is this which *talking* can modify? . . . Discussion does not improve eyesight and hearing" (my italics).¹⁴

Yet of course we do succeed in applying aesthetic terms, and we frequently do succeed by talking (and pointing and gesturing in certain ways) in bringing others to see what we see. One begins to suspect that puzzlement over how we can possibly do this, and puzzlement over the "esoteric" character of aesthetic qualities too, arises from bearing in mind inappropriate philosophical models. When someone is unable to see that the book on the table is brown, we cannot get him to see that it is by talking; consequently it seems puzzling that we might get someone to see that the vase is graceful by talking. If we are to dispel this puzzlement and recognize aesthetic concepts and qualities for what they are, we must abandon unsuitable models and investigate how we actually employ these concepts. With so much interest in and agreement about *what* the critic does, one might expect descriptions of *how* he does it to have been given. But little has been said about this, and what has been said is unsatisfactory.

Miss Macdonald,¹⁵ for example, subscribes to this view of the critic's task as presenting "what is not obvious to casual or uninstructed inspection," and she does ask the question "What sort of considerations are involved, *and how*, to justify a critical verdict?" (my italics). But she does not in fact go on to answer it. She addresses herself instead to the different, though related, question of the interpretation of art works. In complex works different critics claim, often justifiably, to discern different features; hence Miss Macdonald suggests that in critical discourse the critic is bringing us to see what he sees by offering new interpretations. But if the question is "what (the critic) does and how he does it," he cannot be represented either wholly or even mainly as providing new interpretations. His task quite as often is simply to help us appreciate qualities which

other critics have regularly found in the works he discusses. To put the stress upon new interpretations is to leave untouched the question how, by talking, he can help us to see *either* the newly appreciated aesthetic qualities *or* the old. In any case, besides complex poems or plays which may bear many interpretations, there are also relatively simple ones. There are also vases, buildings, and furniture, not to mention faces, sunsets, and scenery, about which no questions of "interpretation" arise but of which we talk in similar ways and make similar judgments. So the "puzzling" questions remain: how do we support these judgments and how do we bring others to see what we see?

Hampshire,¹⁶ who likewise believes that the critic brings us "to see what there is to be seen in the object," does give some account of how the critic does this. "The greatest service of the critic" is to point out, isolate, and place in a frame of attention the "particular features of the particular object which *make* it ugly or beautiful"; for it is "difficult to see and hear all that there is to see and hear," and simply a prejudice to suppose that while "things really do have colours and shapes . . . there do not exist literally and objectively, concordances of colours and perceived rhythms and balances of shapes." However, these "extraordinary qualities" which the critic "may have seen (in the wider sense of 'see')" are "qualities which are of no direct practical interest." Consequently, to bring us to see them the critic employs "an unnatural use of words in description"; "the common vocabulary, being created for practical purposes, obstructs any disinterested perception of things"; and so these qualities "are normally described metaphorically by some transference of terms from the common vocabulary."

Much of what Hampshire says is right. But there is also something quite wrong in the view that the "common" vocabulary "obstructs" our aesthetic purposes, that it is "unnatural" to take it over and use it metaphorically, and that the critic "is under the necessity of building . . . a vocabulary *in opposition to the main tendency of his language*" (my italics). First, while we do often coin new metaphors in order to describe aesthetic qualities, we are by no means always under the necessity of wresting the "common vocabulary" from its "natural" uses to serve our purposes.

There does exist, as I observed earlier, a large and accepted vocabulary of aesthetic terms some of which, whatever their metaphorical origins, are now not metaphors at all, others of which are at most quasi-metaphorical. Second, this view that our use of metaphor and quasi-metaphor for aesthetic purposes is unnatural or a makeshift into which we are forced by a language designed for other purposes misrepresents fundamentally the character of aesthetic qualities and aesthetic language. There is nothing unnatural about using words like "forceful," "dynamic," or "tightly-knit" in criticism; they do their work perfectly and are exactly the words needed for the purposes they serve. We do not want or need to replace them by words which lack the metaphorical element. In using them to describe works of art, the very point is that we are noticing aesthetic qualities related to their literal or common meanings. If we possessed a quite different word from "dynamic," one we could use to point out an aesthetic quality unrelated to the common meaning of "dynamic," it could not be used to describe that quality which "dynamic" does serve to point out. Hampshire pictures "a colony of aesthetes, disengaged from practical needs and manipulations" and says that "descriptions of aesthetic qualities, which for us are metaphorical, might seem to them to have an altogether literal and familiar sense"; they might use "a more directly descriptive vocabulary." But if they had a new and "directly descriptive" vocabulary lacking the links with non-aesthetic properties and interests which our vocabulary possesses, they would have to remain silent about many of the aesthetic qualities we can describe; further, if they were more completely "disengaged from practical needs" and other non-aesthetic awarenesses and interests, they would perforce be blind to many aesthetic qualities we can appreciate. The links between aesthetic qualities and non-aesthetic ones are both obvious and vital. Aesthetic concepts, all of them, carry with them attachments and in one way or another are tethered to or parasitic upon non-aesthetic features. The fact that many aesthetic terms are metaphorical or quasi-metaphorical in no way means that common language is an ill-adapted tool with which we have to struggle. When someone writes as Hampshire does, one suspects again that critical language is being judged against other

models. To use language which is frequently metaphorical might be strange for some *other* purpose or from the standpoint of doing something else, but for the purpose and from the standpoint of making aesthetic observations it is not. To say it is an unnatural use of language for doing *this* is to imply there is or could be for this purpose some other and "natural" use. But these *are* natural ways of talking about aesthetic matters.

To help understand what the critic does, then, how he supports his judgments and gets his audience to see what he sees, I shall attempt a brief description of the methods we use as critics.¹⁷

(1) We may simply mention or point out non-aesthetic features: "Notice these flecks of color, that dark mass there, those lines." By merely drawing attention to those easily discernible features which make the painting luminous or warm or dynamic, we often succeed in bringing someone to see these aesthetic qualities. We get him to see B by mentioning something different, A. Sometimes in doing this we are drawing attention to features which may have gone unnoticed by an untrained or insufficiently attentive eye or ear: "Just listen for the repeated figure in the left hand," "Did you notice the figure of Icarus in the Breughel? It is very small." Sometimes they are features which have been seen or heard but of which the significance or purpose has been missed in any of a variety of ways: "Notice how much darker he has made the central figure, how much brighter these colors are than the adjacent ones," "Of course, you've observed the ploughman in the foreground; but had you considered how he, like everyone else in the picture, is going about his business without noticing the fall of Icarus?" In mentioning features which may be discerned by anyone with normal eyes, ears, and intelligence, we are singling out what may serve as a kind of key to grasping or seeing something else (and the key may not be the same for each person).

(2) On the other hand we often simply mention the very qualities we want people to see. We point to a painting and say, "Notice how nervous and delicate the drawing is," or "See what energy and vitality it has." The use of the aesthetic term itself may do the trick; we say what the quality or character is, and people who had not seen it before see it.

(3) Most often, there is a linking, of remarks about aesthetic and non-aesthetic features: "Have you noticed this line and that, and the points of bright color here and there . . . don't they give it vitality, energy?"

(4) We do, in addition, often make extensive and helpful use of similes and genuine metaphors: "It's as if there are small points of light burning," "as though he had thrown on the paint violently and in anger," "the light shimmers, the lines dance, everything is air, lightness and gaiety," "his canvasses are fires, they crackle, burn, and blaze, even at their most subdued always restlessly flickering, but often bursting into flame, great pyrotechnic displays," and so on.

(5) We make use of contrasts, comparisons, and reminiscences: "Suppose he had made that a lighter yellow, moved it to the right, how flat it would have fallen," "Don't you think it has something of the quality of a Rembrandt?," "Hasn't it the same serenity, peace, and quality of light of those summer evenings in Norfolk?" We use what keys we have to the known sensitivity, susceptibilities, and experience of our audience.

Critics and commentators may range, in their methods, from one extreme to the other, from painstaking concentration on points of detail, line and color, vowels and rhymes, to more or less flowery and luxuriant metaphor. Even the enthusiastic biographical sketch decorated with suitable epithet and metaphor may serve. What is best depends on both the audience and the work under discussion. But this would not be a complete sketch unless certain other notes were added.

(6) Repetition and reiteration often play an important role. When we are in front of a canvas we may come back time and again to the same points, drawing attention to the same lines and shapes, repeating the same words, "swirling," "balance," "luminosity," or the same similes and metaphors, as if time and familiarity, looking harder, listening more carefully, paying closer attention may help. So again with variation; it often helps to talk round what we have said, to build up, supplement with more talk of *the same kind*. When someone misses the swirling quality, when one epithet or one metaphor does not

work, we throw in related ones; we speak of its wild movement, how it twists and turns, writhes and whirls, as though, failing to score a direct hit, we may succeed with a barrage of near-synonyms.

(7) Finally, besides our verbal performances, the rest of our behavior is important. We accompany our talk with appropriate tones of voice, expression, nods, looks, and gestures. A critic may sometimes do more with a sweep of the arm than by talking. An appropriate gesture may make us see the violence in a painting or the character of a melodic line.

These ways of acting and talking are not significantly different whether we are dealing with a particular work, paragraph, or line, or speaking of an artist's work as a whole, or even drawing attention to a sunset or scenery. But even with the speaker doing all this, we may fail to see what he sees. There may be a point, though there need be no limit except that imposed by time and patience, at which he gives up and sets us (or himself) down as lacking in some way, defective in sensitivity. He may tell us to look or read again, or to read or look at other things and then come back again to this; he may suspect there are experiences in life we have missed. But these are the things he does. This is what succeeds if anything does; indeed it is all that can be done.

By realizing clearly that, whether we are dealing with art or scenery or people or natural objects, this is how we operate with aesthetic concepts, we may recognize this sphere of human activity for what it is. We operate with different kinds of concepts in different ways. If we want someone to agree that a color is red we may take it into a good light and ask him to look; if it is viridian we may fetch a color chart and make him compare; if we want him to agree that a figure is fourteen-sided we get him to count; and to bring him to agree that something is dilapidated or that someone is lazy we may do other things, citing features, reasoning and arguing about them, weighing and balancing. These are the methods appropriate to these various concepts. But the ways we get someone to see aesthetic qualities are different; they are of the kind I have described. With each kind of concept we can describe what we do and how we do it. But the methods suited to these other concepts will not do for aesthetic

ones, or vice versa. We cannot prove by argument that something is graceful; but this is no more puzzling than our inability to prove, by using the methods, metaphors, and gestures of the art critic, that it will be mate in ten moves. The questions raised admit of no answer beyond the sort of description I have given. To go on to ask, with puzzlement, how it is that *when* we do these things people come to see, is like asking how is it that, when we take the book into a good light, our companion agrees with us that it is red. There is no place for this kind of question or puzzlement. Aesthetic concepts are as natural, as little esoteric, as any others. It is against the background of different and philosophically more familiar models that they seem queer or puzzling.

I have described how people justify aesthetic judgments and bring others to see aesthetic qualities in things. I shall end by showing that the methods I have outlined are the ones natural for and characteristic of taste concepts from the start. When someone tries to convince me that a painting is delicate or balanced, I have some understanding of these terms already and know in a sense what I am looking for. But if there is puzzlement over how, by talking, he can bring me to see these qualities in this picture, there should be a corresponding puzzlement over how I learned to use aesthetic terms and discern aesthetic qualities in the first place. We may ask, therefore, how we learn to do these things; and this is to inquire (1) what natural potentialities and tendencies people have and (2) how we develop and take advantage of these capacities in training and teaching. Now for the second of these, there is no doubt that our ability to notice and respond to aesthetic qualities is cultivated and developed by our contacts with parents and teachers from quite an early age. What is interesting for my present purpose is that, while we are being taught in the presence of examples what grace, delicacy, and so on are, the methods used, the language and behavior, are of a piece with those of the critic.

To pursue these two questions, consider first those words like "dynamic," "melancholy," "balanced," "taut," or "gay" the aesthetic use of which is quasi-metaphorical. It has already been emphasized that we could not use them thus without some experience of situations where they are used literally. The present inquiry is how we shift from literal to aesthetic uses of them. For this

it is required that there be certain abilities and tendencies to link experiences, to regard certain things as similar, and to see, explore, and be interested in these similarities. It is a feature of human intelligence and sensitivity that we do spontaneously do these things and that the tendency can be encouraged and developed. It is no more baffling that we should employ aesthetic terms of this sort than that we should make metaphors at all. Easy and smooth transitions by which we shift to the use of these aesthetic terms are not hard to find. We suggest to children that simple pieces of music are hurrying or running or skipping or dawdling, from there we move to lively, gay, jolly, happy, smiling, or sad, and, as their experiences and vocabulary broaden, to solemn, dynamic, or melancholy. But the child also discovers for himself many of these parallels and takes interest or delight in them. He is likely on his own to skip, march, clap, or laugh with the music, and without this natural tendency our training would get nowhere. Insofar, however, as we do take advantage of this tendency and help him by training, *we do just what the critic does*. We may merely need to persuade the child to pay attention, to look or listen; or we may simply *call* the music jolly. But we are also likely to use, as the critic does, reiteration, synonyms, parallels, contrasts, similes, metaphors, gestures, and other expressive behavior.

Of course the recognition of similarities and simple metaphorical extensions are not the only transitions to the aesthetic use of language. Others are made in different ways; for instance, by the kind of peripheral cases I mentioned earlier. When our admiration is for something as simple as the thinness of a glass or the smoothness of a fabric, it is not difficult to call attention to such things, evoke a similar delight, and introduce suitable aesthetic terms. These transitions are only the beginnings; it may often be questionable whether a term is yet being used aesthetically or not. Many of the terms I have mentioned may be used in ways which are not straightforwardly literal but of which we should hesitate to say that they demanded much yet by way of aesthetic sensitivity. We speak of warm and cool colors, and we may say of a brightly colored picture that at least it is gay and lively. When we have brought someone to make this sort of metaphorical extension of terms, he has made one of the transitional steps from which he may move on to uses which

more obviously deserve to be called aesthetic and demand more aesthetic appreciation. When I said at the outset that aesthetic sensitivity was rarer than some other natural endowments, I was not denying that it varies in degree from the rudimentary to the refined. Most people learn easily to make the kinds of remarks I am now considering. But when someone can call bright canvasses gay and lively without being able to spot the one which is really vibrant, or can recognize the obvious outward vigor and energy of a student composition played *con fuoco* while failing to see that it lacks inner fire and drive, we do not regard his aesthetic sensitivity in these areas as particularly developed. However, once these transitions from common to aesthetic uses are begun in the more obvious cases, the domain of aesthetic concepts may broaden out, become more subtle, and even partly autonomous. The initial steps, however varied the metaphorical shifts and however varied the experiences upon which they are parasitic, are natural and easy.

Much the same is true when we turn to those words which have no standard non-aesthetic use, "lovely," "pretty," "dainty," "graceful," "elegant." We cannot say that these are learned by a metaphorical shift. But they still are linked to non-aesthetic features in many ways and the learning of them also is made possible by certain kinds of natural response, reaction, and ability. We learn them not so much by noticing similarities, but by our attention being caught and focussed in other ways. Certain phenomena which are outstanding or remarkable or unusual catch the eye or ear, seize our attention and interest, and move us to surprise, admiration, delight, fear, or distaste. Children begin by reacting in these ways to spectacular sunsets, woods in autumn, roses, dandelions, and other striking and colorful objects, and it is in these circumstances that we find ourselves introducing general aesthetic words like "lovely," "pretty," and "ugly." It is not an accident that the first lessons in aesthetic appreciation consist in drawing the child's attention to roses rather than to grass; nor is it surprising that we remark to him on the autumn colors rather than on the subdued tints of winter. We all of us, not only children, pay aesthetic attention more readily and easily to such outstanding and easily noticeable things. We notice with pleasure early spring grass or the first snow, hills of notably marked and varied contours,

scenery flecked with a great variety of color or dappled variously with sun and shadow. We are struck and impressed by great size or mass, as with mountains or cathedrals. We are similarly responsive to unusual precision or minuteness or remarkable feats of skill, as with complex and elaborate filigree, or intricate wood carving and fan-vaulting. It is at these times, taking advantage of these natural interests and admirations, that we first teach the simpler aesthetic words. People of moderate aesthetic sensitivity and sophistication continue to exhibit aesthetic interest mainly on such occasions and to use only the more general words ("pretty," "lovely," and the like). But these situations may serve as a beginning from which we extend our aesthetic interests to wider and less obvious fields, mastering as we go the more subtle and specific vocabulary of taste. The principles do not change; the basis for learning more specific terms like "graceful," "delicate," and "elegant" is also our interest in and admiration for various natural properties ("She seems to move effortlessly, as if floating," "So very thin and fragile, as if a breeze might destroy it," "So small and yet so intricate," "So economical and perfectly adapted").¹⁸ And even with these terms which are not metaphorical themselves, we rely in the same way upon the critic's methods, including comparison, illustration, and metaphor, to teach or make clear what they mean.

I have wished to emphasize in the latter part of this paper the natural basis of responses of various kinds without which aesthetic terms could not be learned. I have also outlined what some of the features are to which we naturally respond: similarities of various sorts, notable colors, shapes, scents, size, intricacy, and much else besides. Even the non-metaphorical aesthetic terms have significant links with all kinds of natural features by which our interest, wonder, admiration, delight, or distaste is aroused. But in particular I have wanted to urge that it should not strike us as puzzling that the critic supports his judgments and brings us to see aesthetic qualities by pointing out key features and talking about them in the way he does. It is by the very same methods that people helped us develop our aesthetic sense and master its vocabulary from the beginning. If we responded to those methods then, it is not surprising that we respond to the critic's discourse now. It would be surprising if, by using this language and behavior,

people could *not* sometimes bring us to see the aesthetic qualities of things; for this would prove us lacking in one characteristically human kind of awareness and activity.

Notes

- 1 I shall speak loosely of an "aesthetic term," even when, because the word sometimes has other uses, it would be more correct to speak of its *use* as an aesthetic term. I shall also speak of "non-aesthetic" words, concepts, features, and so on. None of the terms other writers use, "natural," "observable," "perceptual," "physical," "objective" (qualities), "neutral," "descriptive" (language), when they approach the distinction I am making, is really apt for my purpose.
- 2 A contrast will reinforce this. If a critic were to describe a passage of music as chattering, carbonated, or gritty, a painter's coloring as vitreous, farinaceous, or effervescent, or a writer's style as glutinous, or abrasive, he *would* be using live metaphors rather than drawing on the more normal language of criticism. Words like "athletic," "vertiginous," "silken" may fall somewhere between.
- 3 In a paper reprinted in *Aesthetics and Language*, ed. by W. Elton (Oxford, 1954), pp. 131–46, Arnold Isenberg discusses certain problems about aesthetic concepts and qualities. Like others who approach these problems, he does not isolate them, as I do, from questions about verdicts on the *merits* of works of art, or from questions about *likings* and *preferences*. He says something parallel to my remarks above: "There is not in all the world's criticism a single purely descriptive statement concerning which one is prepared to say beforehand, 'if it is true, I shall *like* that work so much the better'" (p. 139, my italics). I should think *this* is highly questionable.
- 4 Isenberg (op. cit., p. 132) makes a similar point: "If we had been told that the colours of a certain painting are garish, it would be *astonishing* to find that they are *all* very pale and unsaturated" (my italics). But if we say "all" rather than "predominantly," then "astonishing" is the wrong word. What I call "negative conditions" must be distinguished from what I call below features "characteristically" associated or not associated with a taste concept.
- 5 H. L. A. Hart, "The Ascription of Responsibility and Rights" in *Logic and Language*, First Series, ed. by A. G. N. Flew (Oxford, 1951). Hart indeed speaks of "conditions" throughout, see p. 148.

- 6 I cannot in the compass of this paper discuss the other types of apparent exceptions to my thesis. Cases where a man *lacking* in sensitivity might learn and follow a rule, as above, ought to be distinguished from cases where someone who *possesses* sensitivity might know, from a non-aesthetic description, that an aesthetic term applies. I have stated my thesis as though this latter kind of case never occurs because I have had my eye on the logical features of *typical* aesthetic judgments and have preferred to over- rather than understate my view. But with certain aesthetic terms, especially negative ones, there may be some rare genuine exceptions when a description enables us to visualize very fully, and when what is described belongs to certain restricted classes of things, say human faces or animal forms. Perhaps a description like "One eye red and rheumy, the other missing, a wart-covered nose, a twisted mouth, a greenish pallor" may justify in a strong sense ("must be," "cannot but be") the judgments "ugly" or "hideous." If so, such cases are marginal, form a very small minority, and are uncharacteristic or atypical of aesthetic judgments in general. Usually when, on hearing a description, we say "it *must* be very beautiful (graceful, or the like)," we mean no more than "it surely must be, it's only remotely possible that it isn't." Different again are situations, and these are very numerous, where we can move quite simply from "bright colors" to "gay," or from "reds and yellows" to "warm," but where we are as yet only on the borderline of anything that could be called an expression of taste or aesthetic sensibility. I have stressed the importance of this transitional and border area between non-aesthetic and obviously aesthetic judgments below.
- 7 Helen Knight says (Elton, op. cit., p. 152) that "piquant" (one of my "aesthetic" terms) "depends on" various features (a *retroussé* nose, a pointed chin, and the like) and that these features are *criteria* for it; this is what I am denying. She also maintains that "good," when applied to works of art, depends on *criteria* like balance, solidity, depth, profundity (my aesthetic terms again; I should place piquancy in this list). I would deny this too, though I regard it as a different question and do not consider it in this paper. The two questions need separating: the relation of non-aesthetic features (*retroussé*, pointed) to aesthetic qualities, and the relation of aesthetic qualities to "aesthetically good" (verdicts). Most writings which touch on the nature of aesthetic concepts have this other (verdict) question mainly in mind. Mrs. Knight blurs this difference when she says, for example, "‘piquant’ is the same kind of word as ‘good’."
- 8 See articles by Margaret Macdonald and J. A. Passmore in Elton, op. cit., pp. 118, 41, 40, 119.
- 9 As I indicated above, I have dealt only with the relation of *non-aesthetic* to aesthetic features. Perhaps a description in aesthetic terms may occasionally suffice for applying another aesthetic term. Johnson's Dictionary gives "handsome" as "beautiful with dignity"; Shorter O. E. D. gives "pretty" as "beautiful in a slight, dainty, or diminutive way."
- 10 Macdonald in Elton, op. cit., pp. 114, 119. See also pp. 120, 122.
- 11 Macdonald, *ibid.*, pp. 114, 120–3. She speaks of non-aesthetic properties here as "physical" or "observable" qualities, and distinguishes between "physical object" and "work of art."
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16; cf. also John Holloway, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Vol. XXIII (1949), pp. 175–6.
- 13 Stuart Hampshire in Elton, op. cit., p. 165. Cf. also remarks in Elton by Isenberg (pp. 142, 145), Passmore (p. 38), in *Philosophy and Psycho-analysis* by John Wisdom (Oxford, 1953), pp. 223–4, and in Holloway, op. cit., p. 175.
- 14 Macdonald, op. cit., pp. 119–20.
- 15 *Ibid.*, see pp. 127, 122, 125, 115. Other writers also place the stress on interpretation, cf. Holloway, op. cit., p. 173ff.
- 16 Op. cit., pp. 165–8.
- 17 Holloway, op. cit., pp. 173–4, lists some of these very briefly.
- 18 It is worth noticing that most of the words which in current usage are primarily or exclusively aesthetic terms had earlier non-aesthetic uses and gained their present use by some kind of metaphorical shift. Without reposing too great weight on these etymological facts, it can be seen that their history reflects connections with the responses, interests, and natural features I have mentioned as underlying the learning and use of aesthetic terms. These transitions suggest both the dependence of aesthetic upon other interests, and what some of these interests are. Connected with liking, delight, affection, regard, estimation, or choice – *beautiful, graceful, delicate, lovely, exquisite, elegant, dainty*; with fear or repulsion – *ugly*; with what notably catches the eye or attention – *garish, splendid, gaudy*; with what attracts by notable rarity, precision, skill, ingenuity, elaboration – *dainty, nice, pretty, exquisite*; with adaptation to function, suitability to ease of handling – *handsome*.

Categories of Art

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I. Introduction

*False judgments enter art history if we judge from the impression which pictures of different epochs, placed side by side, make on us. . . . They speak a different language.*¹

Paintings and sculptures are to be looked at; sonatas and songs are to be heard. What is important about these works of art, as works of art, is what can be seen or heard in them.² Inspired partly by apparent commonplaces such as these, many recent aesthetic theorists have attempted to purge from criticism of works of art supposedly extraneous excursions into matters not (or not “directly”) available to inspection of the works, and to focus attention on the works themselves. Circumstances connected with a work’s origin, in particular, are frequently held to have no essential bearing on an assessment of its aesthetic nature – for example, who created the work, how, and when; the artist’s intentions and expectations concerning it, his philosophical views, psycho-

logical state, and love life; the artistic traditions and intellectual atmosphere of his society. Once produced (it is argued) the work must stand or fall on its own; it must be judged for what it is, regardless of how it came to be as it is.

Arguments for the irrelevance of such historical circumstances to aesthetic judgments about works of art may, but need not, involve the claim that these circumstances are not of “aesthetic” interest or importance, though obviously they are often important in biographical, historical, psychological, or sociological researches. One might consider an artist’s action in producing a work to be aesthetically interesting, an “aesthetic object” in its own right, while vehemently maintaining its irrelevance to an aesthetic investigation of the work. Robert Rauschenberg once carefully obliterated a drawing by de Kooning, titled the bare canvas “Erased De Kooning Drawing,” framed it, and exhibited it.³ His doing this might be taken as symbolic or expressive (of an attitude toward art, or toward life in general, or whatever) in an “aesthetically” significant manner, perhaps somewhat as an action of a character in a play might be, and yet thought to have no bearing whatever on the aesthetic nature of the finished product. The issue I am here concerned with is how far critical questions about works of art can be *separated* from questions about their histories.⁴

Kendall L. Walton, “Categories of Art” in *Philosophical Review* 79(3), 1970, pp. 334–367. Reproduced with permission of Kendall L. Walton.

One who wants to make this separation quite sharp may regard the basic facts of art along the following lines. Works of art are simply objects with various properties, of which we are primarily interested in perceptual ones – visual properties of paintings, audible properties of music, and so forth.⁵ A work's perceptual properties include "aesthetic" as well as "nonaesthetic" ones – the sense of mystery and tension of a painting as well as its dark coloring and diagonal composition; the energy, exuberance, and coherence of a sonata, as well as its meters, rhythms, pitches, timbres, and so forth; the balance and serenity of a Gothic cathedral as well as its dimensions, lines, and symmetries.⁶ Aesthetic properties are features or characteristics of works of art just as much as nonaesthetic ones are.⁷ They are *in* the works, to be seen, heard, or otherwise perceived there. Seeing a painting's sense of mystery or hearing a sonata's coherence might require looking or listening longer or harder than does perceiving colors and shapes, rhythms and pitches; it may even require special training or a special kind of sensitivity. But these qualities must be discoverable simply by examining the works themselves if they are discoverable at all. It is never even partly *in virtue of* the circumstances of a work's origin that it has a sense of mystery or is coherent or serene. Such circumstances sometimes provide hints concerning what to look for in a work, what we might reasonably expect to find by examining it. But these hints are always theoretically dispensable; a work's aesthetic properties must "in principle" be ascertainable without their help. Surely (it seems) a Rembrandt portrait does not have (or lack) a sense of mystery in virtue of the fact that Rembrandt intended it to have (or to lack) that quality, any more than a contractor's intention to make a roof leakproof makes it so; nor is the portrait mysterious in virtue of any other facts about what Rembrandt thought or how he went about painting the portrait or what his society happened to be like. Such circumstances are important to the result only in so far as they had an effect on the pattern of paint splotches that became attached to the canvas, and the canvas can be examined without in any way considering how the splotches got there. It would not matter in the least to the aesthetic properties of the portrait if the paint had been applied to the canvas

not by Rembrandt at all, but by a chimpanzee or a cyclone in a paint shop.

The view sketched above can easily seem very persuasive. But the tendency of critics to discuss the histories of works of art in the course of justifying aesthetic judgments about them has been remarkably persistent. This is partly because hints derived from facts about a work's history, however dispensable they may be "in principle," are often crucially important in practice. (One might simply not think to listen for a recurring series of intervals in a piece of music, until he learns that the composer meant the work to be structured around it.) No doubt it is partly due also to genuine confusions on the part of critics. But I will argue that (some) facts about the origins of works of art have an *essential* role in criticism, that aesthetic judgments rest on them in an absolutely fundamental way. For this reason, and for another as well, the view that works of art should be judged simply by what can be perceived in them is seriously misleading, though there is something right in the idea that what matters aesthetically about a painting or a sonata is just how it looks or sounds.

II. Standard, Variable, and Contra-Standard Properties

I will continue to call tension, mystery, energy, coherence, balance, serenity, sentimentality, pallidness, disunity, grotesqueness, and so forth, as well as colors and shapes, pitches and timbres *properties* of works of art, though "property" is to be construed broadly enough not to beg any important questions. I will also, following Sibley, call properties of the former sort "aesthetic" properties, but purely for reasons of convenience I will include in this category "representational" and "resemblance" properties, which Sibley excludes – for example, the property of representing or being a picture of Napoleon, that of depicting an old man (as) stooping over a fire, that of resembling, or merely suggesting, a human face, claws (the petals of Van Gogh's sunflowers), or (in music) footsteps or conversation. It is not essential for my purposes to delimit with any exactness the class of aesthetic properties (if indeed any such delimitation is possible), for I am more interested in discussing particular examples

of such properties than in making generalizations about the class as a whole. It will be obvious, however, that what I say about the examples I deal with is also applicable to a great many other properties we would want to call aesthetic.

Sibley points out that a work's aesthetic properties depend on its nonaesthetic properties; the former are "emergent" or "*Gestalt*" properties based on the latter.⁸ I take this to be true of all the examples of aesthetic properties we will be dealing with, including representational and resemblance ones. It is because of the configuration of colors and shapes on a painting, perhaps in particular its dark colors and diagonal composition, that it has a sense of mystery and tension, if it does. The colors and shapes of a portrait are responsible for its resembling an old man and (perhaps with its title) its depicting an old man. The coherence or unity of a piece of music (for example, Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*) may be largely due to the frequent recurrence of a rhythmic motive, and the regular meter of a song plus the absence of harmonic modulation and of large intervals in the voice part may make it serene or peaceful.

Moreover, a work *seems* or *appears* to us to have certain aesthetic properties because we observe in it, or it appears to us to have, certain nonaesthetic features (though it may not be necessary to notice consciously all the relevant nonaesthetic features). A painting depicting an old man may not look like an old man to someone who is color-blind, or when it is seen from an extreme angle or in bad lighting conditions so that its colors or shapes are distorted or obscured. Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* performed in such a sloppy manner that many occurrences of the four-note rhythmic motive do not sound similar may seem incoherent or disunified.

I will argue, however, that a work's aesthetic properties depend not only on its nonaesthetic ones, but also on which of its nonaesthetic properties are "standard," which "variable," and which "contra-standard," in senses to be explained. I will approach this thesis by way of the psychological point that what aesthetic properties a work seems to us to have depends not only on what nonaesthetic features we perceive in it, but also on which of them are standard, which variable, and which contra-standard *for us* (in a sense also to be explained).

It is necessary to introduce first a distinction between standard, variable, and contra-standard properties relative to perceptually distinguishable categories of works of art. Such categories include media, genre, styles, forms, and so forth – for example, the categories of paintings, cubist paintings, Gothic architecture, classical sonatas, paintings in the style of Cézanne, and music in the style of late Beethoven – if they are interpreted in such a way that membership is determined solely by features that can be perceived in a work when it is experienced in the normal manner. Thus whether or not a piece of music was written in the eighteenth century is irrelevant to whether it belongs to the category of classical sonatas (interpreted in this way), and whether a work was produced by Cézanne or Beethoven has nothing essential to do with whether it is in the style of Cézanne or late Beethoven. The category of etchings as normally construed is not perceptually distinguishable in the requisite sense, for to be an etching is, I take it, simply to have been produced in a particular manner. But the category of *apparent* etchings, works which *look* like etchings from the quality of their lines, whether they are etchings or not, is perceptually distinguishable. A category will not count as "perceptually distinguishable" in my sense if in order to determine perceptually whether something belongs to it, it is necessary (in some or all cases) to determine which categories it is correctly perceived in partly or wholly on the basis of nonperceptual considerations. (See Section IV below.) This prevents, for example, the category of serene things from being perceptually distinguishable in this sense.

A feature of a work of art is *standard* with respect to a (perceptually distinguishable) category just in case it is among those in virtue of which works in that category belong to that category – that is, just in case the lack of that feature would disqualify, or tend to disqualify, a work from that category. A feature is *variable* with respect to a category just in case it has nothing to do with works' belonging to that category; the possession or lack of the feature is irrelevant to whether a work qualifies for the category. Finally, a *contra-standard* feature with respect to a category is the absence of a standard feature with respect to that category – that is, a feature whose presence tends to *disqualify* works as members of the category. Needless to say, it will not be clear

in *all* cases whether a feature of a work is standard, variable, or contra-standard relative to a given category, since the criteria for classifying works of art are far from precise. But clear examples are abundant. The flatness of a painting and the motionlessness of its markings are standard, and its particular shapes and colors are variable, relative to the category of painting. A protruding three-dimensional object or an electrically driven twitching of the canvas would be contra-standard relative to this category. The straight lines in stick-figure drawings and squarish shapes in cubist paintings are standard with respect to those categories respectively, though they are variable with respect to the categories of drawing and painting. The exposition-development-recapitulation form of a classical sonata is standard, and its thematic material is variable, relative to the category of sonatas.

In order to explain what I mean by features being standard, variable, or contra-standard *for a person on a particular occasion*, I must introduce the notion of perceiving a work in, or as belonging to, a certain (perceptually distinguishable) category.⁹ To perceive a work in a certain category is to perceive the "*Gestalt*" of that category in the work. This needs some explanation. People familiar with Brahmsian music – that is, music in the style of Brahms (notably, works of Johannes Brahms) – or impressionist paintings can frequently recognize members of these categories by recognizing the Brahmsian or impressionist *Gestalt* qualities. Such recognition is dependent on perception of particular features that are standard relative to these categories, but it is not a matter of *inferring* from the presence of such features that a work is Brahmsian or impressionist. One may not notice many of the relevant features, and he may be very vague about which ones are relevant. If I recognize a work as Brahmsian by first noting its lush textures, its basically traditional harmonic and formal structure, its superimposition and alternation of duple and triple meters, and so forth, and recalling that these characteristics are typical of Brahmsian works, I have not recognized it by hearing the Brahmsian *Gestalt*. To do that is simply to recognize it by its Brahmsian *sound*, without necessarily paying attention to the features ("cues") responsible for it. Similarly, recognizing an impressionist painting by its impressionist

Gestalt, is recognizing the impressionist *look* about it, which we are familiar with from other impressionist paintings; not applying a rule we have learned for recognizing it from its features.

To *perceive* a *Gestalt* quality in a work – that is, to perceive it in a certain category – is not, or not merely, to *recognize* that *Gestalt* quality. Recognition is a momentary occurrence, whereas perceiving a quality is a continuous state which may last for a short or long time. (For the same reason, seeing the ambiguous duck-rabbit figure as a duck is not, or not merely, recognizing a property of it.) We perceive the Brahmsian or impressionist *Gestalt* in a work when, and as long as, it *sounds* (*looks*) Brahmsian or impressionist to us. This involves perceiving (not necessarily being aware of) features standard relative to that category. But it is not *just* this, nor this plus the intellectual realization that these features make the work Brahmsian, or impressionist. These features are perceived combined into a single *Gestalt* quality.

We can of course perceive a work in several or many different categories at once. A Brahms sonata might be heard simultaneously as a piece of music, a sonata, a romantic work, and a Brahmsian work. Some pairs of categories, however, seem to be such that one cannot perceive a work as belonging to both at once, much as one cannot see the duck-rabbit both as a duck and as a rabbit simultaneously. One cannot see a photographic image simultaneously as a still photograph and as (part of) a film, nor can one see something both in the category of paintings and at the same time in the category (to be explained shortly) of *guernicas*.

It will be useful to point out some of the *causes* of our perceiving works in certain categories. (a) In which categories we perceive a work depends in part, of course, on what other works we are familiar with. The more works of a certain sort we have experienced, the more likely it is that we will perceive a particular work in that category. (b) What we have heard critics and others say about works we have experienced, how they have categorized them, and what resemblances they have pointed out to us is also important. If no one has ever explained to me what is distinctive about Schubert's style (as opposed to the styles of, say, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Brahms, Hugo Wolf), or even pointed out that

there is such a distinctive style, I may never have learned to hear the Schubertian *Gestalt* quality, even if I have heard many of Schubert's works, and so I may not hear his works as Schubertian. (c) How we are introduced to the particular work in question may be involved. If a Cézanne painting is exhibited in a collection of French Impressionist works, or if before seeing it we are told that it is French Impressionist, we are more likely to see it as French Impressionist than if it is exhibited in a random collection and we are not told anything about it beforehand.

I will say that a feature of a work is standard for a particular person on a particular occasion when, and only when, it is standard relative to some category in which he perceives it, and is not contra-standard relative to any category in which he perceives it. A feature is variable for a person on an occasion just when it is variable relative to *all* of the categories in which he perceives it. And a feature is contra-standard for a person on an occasion just when it is contra-standard relative to *any* of the categories in which he perceives it.¹⁰

III. A Point about Perception

I turn now to my psychological thesis that what aesthetic properties a work seems to have, what aesthetic effect it has on us, how it strikes us aesthetically often depends (in part) on which of its features are standard, which variable, and which contra-standard for us. I offer a series of examples in support of this thesis.

(a) Representational and resemblance properties provide perhaps the most obvious illustration of this thesis. Many works of art look like or resemble other objects – people, buildings, mountains, bowls of fruit, and so forth. Rembrandt's "Titus Reading" looks like a boy, and in particular like Rembrandt's son; Picasso's "Les Femmes d'Alger" looks like five women, four standing and one sitting (though not *especially* like any particular women). A portrait may even be said to be a *perfect* likeness of the sitter, or to capture his image *exactly*.

An important consideration in determining whether a work *depicts* or *represents* a particular object, or an object of a certain sort (for example, Rembrandt's son, or simply *a boy*), in the sense

of being a picture, sculpture, or whatever of it¹¹ is whether the work resembles that object, or objects of that kind. A significant degree of resemblance is, I suggest, a necessary condition in most contexts for such representation or depiction,¹² though the resemblance need not be obvious at first glance. If we are unable to see a similarity between a painting purportedly of a woman and women, I think we would have to suppose either that there is such a similarity which we have not yet discovered (as one might fail to see a face in a maze of lines), or that it simply is not a picture of a woman. Resemblance is of course not a *sufficient* condition for representation, since a portrait (containing only one figure) might resemble both the sitter and his twin brother equally but is not a portrait of both of them. (The title might determine which of them it depicts.)¹³

It takes only a touch of perversity, however, to find much of our talk about resemblances between works of art and other things preposterous. Paintings and people are *very* different sorts of things. Paintings are pieces of canvas supporting splotches of paint, while people are live, three-dimensional, flesh-and-blood animals. Moreover, except rarely and under special conditions of observation (probably including bad lighting) paintings and people *look* very different. Paintings look like pieces of canvas (or anyway flat surfaces) covered with paint and people look like flesh-and-blood animals. There is practically no danger of confusing them. How, then, can anyone seriously hold that a portrait resembles the sitter to any significant extent, let alone that it is a perfect likeness of him? Yet it remains true that many paintings strike us as resembling people, sometimes very much or even exactly – despite the fact that they look so very different!

To resolve this paradox we must recognize that the resemblances we perceive between, for example, portraits and people, those that are relevant in determining what works of art depict or represent, are resemblances of a somewhat special sort, tied up with the categories in which we perceive such works. The properties of a work which are standard for us are ordinarily irrelevant to what we take it to look like or resemble in the relevant sense, and hence to what we take it to depict or represent. The properties of a portrait which make it *so* different from, so easily

distinguishable from, a person – such as its flatness and its *painted* look – are standard for us. Hence these properties just do not count with regard to what (or whom) it looks like. It is only the properties which are variable for us, the colors and shapes on the work's surface, that make it look to us like what it does. And these are the ones which are taken as relevant in determining what (if anything) the work represents.¹⁴

Other examples will reinforce this point. A marble bust of a Roman emperor seems to us to resemble a man with, say, an aquiline nose, a wrinkled brow, and an expression of grim determination, and we take it to represent a man with, or as having, those characteristics. But why don't we say that it resembles and represents a perpetually motionless man, of uniform (marble) color, who is severed at the chest? It is similar to such a man, it seems, and much more so than to a normally colored, mobile, and whole man. But we are not struck by the former similarity when we see the bust, obvious though it is on reflection. The bust's uniform color, motionlessness, and abrupt ending at the chest are standard properties relative to the category of busts, and since we see it as a bust they are standard for us. Similarly, black-and-white drawings do not look to us like colorless scenes and we do not take them to depict things as being colorless, nor do we regard stick-figure drawings as resembling and depicting only very thin people. A cubist work might look like a person with a cubical head to someone not familiar with the cubist style. But the standardness of such cubical shapes for people who see it as a cubist work prevents them from making that comparison.

The shapes of a painting or a still photograph of a high jumper in action are motionless, but these pictures do not look to us like a high jumper frozen in midair. Indeed, depending on features of the pictures which are variable for us (for example, the exact positions of the figures, swirling brush strokes in the painting, slight blurrings of the photographic image) the athlete may seem in a frenzy of activity; the pictures may convey a vivid sense of movement. But if static images exactly like those of the two pictures occur in a motion picture, and we see it as a motion picture, they probably would strike us as resembling a static athlete. This is because the immobility of the images is standard relative to the category of

still pictures and variable relative to that of motion pictures. (Since we are so familiar with still pictures it might be difficult to see the static images as motion pictures for very long, rather than as [filmed] still pictures. But we could not help seeing them that way if we had no acquaintance at all with the medium of still pictures.) My point here is brought out by the tremendous aesthetic difference we are likely to experience between a film of a dancer moving *very* slowly and a still picture of him, even if "objectively" the two images are very nearly identical. We might well find the former studied, calm, deliberate, laborious, and the latter dynamic, energetic, flowing, or frenzied.

In general, then, what we regard a work as resembling, and as representing, depends on the properties of the work which are variable, and not on those which are standard for us.¹⁵ The latter properties serve to determine what *kind* of a representation the work is, rather than what it represents or resembles. We take them for granted, as it were, in representations of that kind. This principle helps to explain also how clouds can look like elephants, how diatonic orchestral music can suggest a conversation or a person crying or laughing, and how a twelve-year-old boy can look like his middle-aged father.

We can now see how a portrait can be an *exact* likeness of the sitter, despite the huge differences between the two. The differences, in so far as they involve properties standard for us, simply do not count against likeness, and hence not against exact likeness. Similarly, a boy not only can resemble his father but can be his "spitting image," despite the boy's relative youthfulness. It is clear that the notions of resemblance and exact resemblance that we are concerned with are not even cousins of the notion of perceptual indistinguishability.

(b) The importance of the distinction between standard and variable properties is by no means limited to cases involving representation or resemblance. Imagine a society which does not have an established medium of painting, but does produce a kind of work of art called *guernicas*. *Guernicas* are like versions of Picasso's "Guernica" done in various bas-relief dimensions. All of them are surfaces with the colors and shapes of Picasso's "Guernica," but the surfaces are molded to protrude from the wall like relief maps

of different kinds of terrain. Some *guernicas* have rolling surfaces, others are sharp and jagged, still others contain several relatively flat planes at various angles to each other, and so forth. Picasso's "Guernica" would be counted as a *guernica* in this society – a perfectly flat one – rather than as a painting. Its flatness is variable and the figures on its surface are standard relative to the category of *guernicas*. Thus the flatness, which is standard for us, would be variable for members of the other society (if they should come across "Guernica") and the figures on the surface, which are variable for us, would be standard for them. This would make for a profound difference between our aesthetic reaction to "Guernica" and theirs. It seems violent, dynamic, vital, disturbing to us. But I imagine it would strike them as cold, stark, lifeless, or serene and restful, or perhaps bland, dull, boring – but in any case *not* violent, dynamic, and vital. We do not pay attention to or take note of "Guernica"'s flatness; this is a feature we take for granted in paintings, as it were. But for the other society this is "Guernica"'s most striking and noteworthy characteristic – what is *expressive* about it. Conversely, "Guernica"'s color patches, which we find noteworthy and expressive, are insignificant to them.

It is important to notice that this difference in aesthetic response is not due *solely* to the fact that we are much more familiar with flat works of art than they are, and they are more familiar with "Guernica"'s colors and shapes. Someone equally familiar with paintings and *guernicas* might, I think, see Picasso's "Guernica" as a painting on some occasions, and as a *guernica* on others. On the former occasions it will probably look dynamic, violent, and so forth to him, and on the latter cold, serene, bland, or lifeless. Whether he sees the work in a museum of paintings or a museum of *guernicas*, or whether he has been told that it is a painting or a *guernica*, may influence how he sees it. But I think he might be able to shift at will from one way of seeing it to the other, somewhat as one shifts between seeing the duck-rabbit as a duck and seeing it as a rabbit.

This example and the previous ones might give the impression that in general only features of a work that are variable for us are aesthetically important – that these are the expressive, aesthetically active properties, as far as we are concerned, whereas features standard for us are

aesthetically inert. But this notion is quite mistaken, as the following examples will demonstrate. Properties standard for us are not aesthetically lifeless, though the life that they have, the aesthetic effect they have on us, is typically very different from what it would be if they were variable for us.

(c) Because of the very fact that features standard for us do not seem striking or noteworthy, that they are somehow expected or taken for granted, they can contribute to a work a sense of order, inevitability, stability, correctness. This is perhaps most notably true of large-scale structural properties in the time arts. The exposition-development-recapitulation form (including the typical key and thematic relationships) of the first movements of classical sonatas, symphonies, and string quartets is standard with respect to the category of works in sonata-allegro form, and standard for listeners, including most of us, who hear them as belonging to that category. So proceeding along the lines of sonata-allegro form seems *right* to us; to our ears that is how sonatas are *supposed* to behave. We feel that we know where we are and where we are going throughout the work – more so, I suggest, than we would if we were not familiar with sonata-allegro form, if following the strictures of that form were variable rather than standard for us.¹⁶ Properties standard for us do not always have this sort of unifying effect, however. The fact that a piano sonata contains only piano sounds, or uses the Western system of harmony throughout, does not make it seem unified to us. The reason, I think, is that these properties are *too* standard for us in a sense that needs explicating (cf. note 10). Nevertheless, sonata form is unifying partly because it is standard rather than variable for us.

(d) That a work (or part of it) has a certain determinate characteristic (for example, of size, speed, length, volume) is often variable relative to a particular category, when it is nevertheless standard for that category that the variable characteristic falls within a certain range. In such cases the aesthetic effect of the determinate variable property may be colored by the standard limits of the range. Hence these limits function as an aesthetic catalyst, even if not as an active ingredient.

Piano music is frequently marked *sostenuto*, *cantabile*, *legato*, or *lyrical*. But how can the pianist

possibly carry out such instructions? Piano tones diminish in volume drastically immediately after the key is struck, becoming inaudible relatively promptly, and there is no way the player can prevent this. If a singer or violinist should produce sounds even approaching a piano's in suddenness of demise, they would be nerve-wrackingly sharp and percussive – anything but *cantabile* or lyrical! Yet piano music *can* be *cantabile*, *legato*, or lyrical nevertheless; sometimes it is extraordinarily so (for example, a good performance of the *Adagio Cantabile* movement of Beethoven's *Pathétique* sonata). What makes this possible is the very fact that the drastic diminution of piano tones cannot be prevented, and hence never is. It is a standard feature for piano music. A pianist can, however, by a variety of devices, control a tone's rate of diminution and length within the limits dictated by the nature of the instrument.¹⁷ Piano tones may thus be *more or less* sustained within these limits, and *how* sustained they are, how quickly or slowly they diminish and how long they last, within the range of possibilities, is variable for piano music. A piano passage that sounds lyrical or *cantabile* to us is one in which the individual tones are *relatively* sustained, given the capabilities of the instrument. Such a passage sounds lyrical only because piano music is limited as it is, and we hear it as piano music; that is, the limitations are standard properties for us. The character of the passage is determined not merely by the "absolute" nature of the sounds, but by that in relation to the standard property of what piano tones can be like.¹⁸

This principle helps to explain the lack of energy and brilliance that we sometimes find even in very fast passages of electronic music. The energy and brilliance of a fast violin or piano passage derives not merely from the absolute speed of the music (together with accents, rhythmic characteristics, and so forth), but from the fact that it is fast *for that particular medium*. In electronic music different pitches can succeed one another at any frequency up to and including that at which they are no longer separately distinguishable. Because of this it is difficult to make electronic music *sound* fast (energetic, violent). For when we have heard enough electronic music to be aware of the possibilities we do not feel that the speed of a passage approaches a limit, no matter how fast it is.¹⁹

There are also visual correlates of these musical examples. A small elephant, one which is smaller than most elephants with which we are familiar, might impress us as charming, cute, delicate, or puny. This is not simply because of its (absolute) size, but because it is small *for an elephant*. To people who are familiar not with our elephants but with a race of mini-elephants, the same animal may look massive, strong, dominant, threatening, lumbering, if it is large for a mini-elephant. The size of elephants is variable relative to the class of elephants, but it varies only within a certain (not precisely specifiable) range. It is a standard property of elephants that they do fall within this range. How an elephant's size affects us aesthetically depends, since we see it as an elephant, on whether it falls in the upper, middle, or lower part of the range.

(e) Properties standard for a certain category which do not derive from physical limitations of the medium can be regarded as results of more or less conventional "rules" for producing works in the given category (for example, the "rules" of sixteenth-century counterpoint, or those for twelve-tone music). These rules may combine to create a dilemma for the artist which, if he is talented, he may resolve ingeniously and gracefully. The result may be a work with an aesthetic character very different from what it would have had if it had not been for those rules. Suppose that the first movement of a sonata in G major modulates to C-sharp major by the end of the development section. A rule of sonata form decrees that it must return to G for the recapitulation. But the keys of G and C-sharp are as unrelated as any two keys can be; it is difficult to modulate smoothly and quickly from one to the other. Suppose also that while the sonata is in C-sharp there are signs that, given other rules of sonata form, indicate that the recapitulation is imminent (for example, motivic hints of the return, an emotional climax, or a cadenza). Listeners who hear it as a work in sonata form are likely to have a distinct feeling of unease, tension, uncertainty, as the time for the recapitulation approaches. If the composer with a stroke of ingenuity accomplishes the necessary modulation quickly, efficiently, and naturally, this will give them a feeling of relief – one might say of deliverance. The movement to C-sharp (which may have seemed alien and brashly adventurous)

will have proven to be quite appropriate, and the entire sequence will in retrospect have a sense of correctness and perfection about it. Our impression of it is likely, I think, to be very much like our impression of a “beautiful” or “elegant” proof in mathematics. (Indeed the composer’s task in this example is not unlike that of producing such a proof.)

But suppose that the rule for sonatas were that the recapitulation must be *either* in the original key *or* in the key one half-step below it. Thus in the example above the recapitulation could have been in F-sharp major rather than G major. This possibility removes the sense of tension from the occurrence of C-sharp major in the development section, for a modulation from C-sharp to F-sharp is as easy as any modulation is (since C-sharp is the dominant of F-sharp). Of course, there would also be no special *release* of tension when the modulation to G is effected, there being no tension to be released. In fact, that modulation probably would be rather surprising, since the permissible modulation to F-sharp would be much more natural.

Thus the effect that the sonata has on us depends on which of its properties are dictated by “rules,” which ones are standard relative to the category of sonatas and hence standard for us.

(f) I turn now to features which are contra-standard for us – that is, ones which have a tendency to disqualify a work from a category in which we nevertheless perceive it. We are likely to find such features shocking, or disconcerting, or startling, or upsetting, just because they are contra-standard for us. Their presence may be so obtrusive that they obscure the work’s variable properties. Three-dimensional objects protruding from a canvas and movement in a sculpture are contra-standard relative to the categories of painting and (traditional) sculpture respectively. These features are contra-standard for us, and probably shocking, if despite them we perceive the works possessing them in the mentioned categories. The monochromatic paintings of Yves Klein are disturbing to us (at least at first) for this reason: we see them as paintings, though they contain the feature contra-standard for paintings of being one solid color. Notice that we find other similarly monochromatic surfaces – for example, walls of living rooms – not in the least disturbing, and indeed quite unnoteworthy.

If we are exposed frequently to works containing a certain kind of feature which is contra-standard for us, we ordinarily adjust our categories to accommodate it, making it contra-standard for us no longer. The first painting with a three-dimensional object glued to it was no doubt shocking. But now that the technique has become commonplace we are not shocked. This is because we no longer see these works as *paintings*, but rather as members of either (a) a new category – *collages* – in which case the offending feature has become standard rather than contra-standard for us, or (b) an expanded category which includes paintings both with and without attached objects, in which case that feature is variable for us.

But it is not just the rarity, unusualness, or unexpectedness of a feature that makes it shocking. If a work differs *too* significantly from the norms of a certain category we do not perceive it in that category and hence the difference is not contra-standard for us, even if we have not previously experienced works differing from that category in that way. A sculpture which is constantly and vigorously in motion would be so obviously and radically different from traditional sculptures that we probably would not perceive it as one even if it is the first moving sculpture we have come across. We would either perceive it as a *kinetic* sculpture, or simply remain confused. In contrast, a sculptured bust which is traditional in every respect except that one ear twitches slightly every thirty seconds would be perceived as an ordinary sculpture. So the twitching ear would be contra-standard for us and would be considerably more unsettling than the much greater movement of the other kinetic sculpture. Similarly, a very small colored area of an otherwise entirely black-and-white drawing would be very disconcerting. But if enough additional color is added to it we will see it as a colored rather than a black-and-white drawing, and the shock will vanish.

This point helps to explain a difference between the harmonic aberrations of Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde* on the one hand and on the other Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Jeux* and Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* as well as his later twelve-tone works. The latter are not merely *more* aberrant, *less* tonal, than *Tristan*. They differ from traditional tonal music in such respects and to

such an extent that they are not heard as tonal at all. *Tristan*, however, retains enough of the apparatus of tonality, despite its deviations, to be heard as a tonal work. For this reason its lesser deviations are often the more shocking.²⁰ *Tristan* plays on harmonic traditions by selectively following and flaunting them, while *Pierrot Lunaire* and the others simply ignore them.

Shock then arises from features that are not just rare or unique, but ones that are contra-standard relative to categories in which objects possessing them are perceived. But it must be emphasized that to be contra-standard relative to a certain category is not merely to be rare or unique *among things of that category*. The melodic line of Schubert's song, "*Im Walde*," is probably unique; it probably does not occur in any other songs, or other works of any sort. But it is not contra-standard relative to the category of songs, because it does not tend to disqualify the work from that category. Nor is it contra-standard relative to any other category to which we hear the work as belonging. And clearly we do not find this melodic line at all upsetting. What is important is not the rarity of a feature, but its connection with the classification of the work. Features contra-standard for us are perceived as being misfits in a category which the work strikes us as belonging to, as doing *violence* to such a category, and being rare in a category is not the same thing as being a misfit in it.

It should be clear from the above examples that how a work affects us aesthetically – what aesthetic properties it seems to us to have and what ones we are inclined to attribute to it – depends in a variety of important ways on which of its features are standard, which variable, and which contra-standard for us. Moreover, this is obviously not an isolated or exceptional phenomenon, but a pervasive characteristic of aesthetic perception. I should emphasize that my purpose has not been to establish general principles about how each of the three sorts of properties affects us. How any particular feature affects us depends also on many variables I have not discussed. The important point is that in many cases whether a feature is standard, variable, or contra-standard for us has a great deal to do with what effect it has on us. We must now begin to assess the theoretical consequences of this.

IV. Truth and Falsity

The fact that what aesthetic properties a thing seems to have may depend on what categories it is perceived in raises a question about how to determine what aesthetic properties it really does have. If "*Guernica*" appears dynamic when seen as a painting, and not dynamic when seen as a *guernica*, is it dynamic or not? Can one way of seeing it be ruled correct, and the other incorrect? One way of approaching this problem is to deny that the apparently conflicting aesthetic judgments of people who perceive a work in different categories actually do conflict.²¹

Judgments that works of art have certain aesthetic properties, it might be suggested, implicitly involve reference to some particular set of categories. Thus our claim that "*Guernica*" is dynamic really amounts to the claim that it is (as we might say) dynamic *as a painting*, or for people who see it as a painting. The judgment that it is not dynamic made by people who see it as a *guernica* amounts simply to the judgment that it is not dynamic *as a guernica*. Interpreted in these ways, the two judgments are of course quite compatible. Terms like "large" and "small" provide a convenient model for this interpretation. An elephant might be both small as an elephant and large as a mini-elephant, and hence it might be called truly either "large" or "small," depending on which category is implicitly referred to.

I think that aesthetic judgments are in *some* contexts amenable to such category-relative interpretations, especially aesthetic judgments about natural objects (clouds, mountains, sunsets) rather than works of art. (It will be evident that the alternative account suggested below is not readily applicable to most judgments about natural objects.) But most of our aesthetic judgments can be forced into this mold only at the cost of distorting them beyond recognition.

My main objection is that category-relative interpretations do not allow aesthetic judgments to be mistaken often enough. It would certainly be natural to consider a person who calls "*Guernica*" stark, cold, or dull, because he sees it as a *guernica*, to be *mistaken*: he misunderstands the work because he is looking at it in the wrong way. Similarly, one who asserts that a good performance of the *Adagio Cantabile* of Beethoven's *Pathétique* is percussive, or that a Roman bust

looks like a unicolored, immobile man severed at the chest and depicts him as such, is simply wrong, even if his judgment is a result of his perceiving the work in different categories from those in which we perceive it. Moreover, we do not accord a status any more privileged to our own aesthetic judgments. We are likely to regard, for example, cubist paintings, serial music, or Chinese music as formless, incoherent, or disturbing on our first contact with these forms largely because, I suggest, we would not be perceiving the works as cubist paintings, serial music, or Chinese music. But after becoming familiar with these kinds of art we would probably *retract* our previous judgments, admit that they were mistaken. It would be quite inappropriate to protest that what we meant previously was merely that the works were formless or disturbing for the categories in which we then perceived them, while admitting that they are not for the categories of cubist paintings, or serial, or Chinese music. The conflict between apparently incompatible aesthetic judgments made while perceiving a work in different categories does not simply evaporate when the difference of categories is pointed out, as does the conflict between the claims that an animal is large and that it is small, when it is made clear that the person making the first claim regarded it as a mini-elephant and the one making the second regarded it as an elephant. The latter judgments do not (necessarily) reflect a real disagreement about the size of the animal, but the former do reflect a real disagreement about the aesthetic nature of the work.

Thus it seems that, at least in some cases, it is *correct* to perceive a work in certain categories, and *incorrect* to perceive it in certain others; that is, our judgments of it when we perceive it in the former are likely to be true, and those we make when perceiving it in the latter false. This provides us with absolute senses of “standard,” “variable,” and “contra-standard”: features of a work are standard, variable, or contra-standard absolutely just in case they are standard, variable, or contra-standard (respectively) for people who perceive the work correctly. (Thus an absolutely standard feature is standard relative to some category in which the work is correctly perceived and contra-standard relative to none, an absolutely variable feature is variable relative to all such categories, and an absolutely contra-

standard feature is contra-standard relative to at least one such category.)

How is it to be determined in which categories a work is correctly perceived? There is certainly no very precise or well-defined procedure to be followed. Different criteria are emphasized by different people and in different situations. But there are several fairly definite considerations which typically figure in critical discussions and fit our intuitions reasonably well. I suggest that the following circumstances count toward its being correct to perceive a work, *W*, in a given category, *C*:

(i) The presence in *W* of a relatively large number of features standard with respect to *C*. The correct way of perceiving a work is likely to be that in which it has a minimum of contra-standard features for us. I take the relevance of this consideration to be obvious. It cannot be correct to perceive Rembrandt’s “Titus Reading” as a kinetic sculpture, if this is possible, just because that work has too few of the features which make kinetic sculptures kinetic sculptures. But of course this does not get us very far, for “Guernica,” for example, qualifies equally well on this count for being perceived as a painting and as a *guernica*.

(ii) The fact, if it is one, that *W* is better, or more interesting or pleasing aesthetically, or more worth experiencing when perceived in *C* than it is when perceived in alternative ways. The correct way of perceiving a work is likely to be the way in which it comes off best.

(iii) The fact, if it is one, that the artist who produced *W* intended or expected it to be perceived in *C*, or thought of it as a *C*.

(iv) The fact, if it is one, that *C* is well established in and recognized by the society in which *W* was produced. A category is well established in and recognized by a society if the members of the society are familiar with works in that category, consider a work’s membership in it a fact worth mentioning, exhibit works of that category together, and so forth – that is, roughly if that category figures importantly in their way of classifying works of art. The categories of impressionist painting and Brahmsian music are well established and recognized in our society; those of *guernicas*, paintings with diagonal composition containing green crosses, and pieces of music containing between four and eight F-sharps and

at least seventeen quarter notes every eight bars are not. The categories in which a work is correctly perceived, according to this condition, are generally the ones in which the artist's contemporaries did perceive or would have perceived it.

In certain cases I think the mechanical process by which a work was produced, or (for example, in architecture) the non-perceptible physical characteristics or internal structure of a work, is relevant. A work is probably correctly perceived as an apparent etching rather than, say, an apparent woodcut or line drawing, if it was produced by the etching process. The strength of materials in a building, or the presence of steel girders inside wooden or plaster columns counts toward (not necessarily conclusively) the correctness of perceiving it in the category of buildings with visual characteristics typical of buildings constructed in that manner. Because of their limited applicability I will not discuss these considerations further here.

What can be said in support of the relevance of conditions (ii), (iii), and (iv)? In the examples mentioned above, the categories in which we consider a work correctly perceived seem to meet (to the best of our knowledge) each of these three conditions. I would suppose that "Guernica" is better seen as a painting than it would be seen as a *guernica* (though this would be hard to prove). In any case, Picasso certainly intended it to be seen as a painting rather than a *guernica*, and the category of paintings is, and that of *guernicas* is not, well established in his (that is, our) society. But this of course does not show that (ii), (iii), and (iv) *each* is relevant. It tends to indicate only that one or other of them, or some combination, is relevant. The difficulty of assessing each of the three conditions individually is complicated by the fact that by and large they can be expected to coincide, to yield identical conclusions. Since an artist usually intends his works for his contemporaries he is likely to intend them to be perceived in categories established in and recognized by his society. Moreover, it is reasonable to expect works to come off better when perceived in the intended categories than when perceived in others. An artist tries to produce works which are well worth experiencing when perceived in the intended way and, unless we have reason to think he is totally incompetent, there is some presump-

tion that he succeeded at least to some extent. But it is more or less a matter of chance whether the work comes off well when perceived in some unintended way. The convergence of the three conditions, however, at the same time diminishes the *practical* importance of justifying them individually, since in most cases we can decide how to judge particular works of art without doing so. But the theoretical question remains.

I will begin with (ii). If we are faced with a choice between two ways of perceiving a work, and the work is very much better perceived in one way than it is perceived in the other, I think that, at least in the absence of contrary considerations, we would be strongly inclined to settle on the former way of perceiving it as the *correct* way. The process of trying to determine what is in a work consists partly in casting around among otherwise plausible ways of perceiving it for one in which the work is good. We feel we are coming to a correct understanding of a work when we begin to like or enjoy it; we are finding what is really there when it seems to be worth experiencing.

But if (ii) is relevant, it is quite clearly not the *only* relevant consideration. Take any work of art we can agree is of fourth- or fifth- or tenth-rate quality. It is quite possible that if this work were perceived in some far-fetched set of categories that someone might dream up, it would appear to be first-rate, a masterpiece. Finding such *ad hoc* categories obviously would require talent and ingenuity on the order of that necessary to produce a masterpiece in the first place. But we can sketch how one might begin searching for them. (a) If the mediocre work suffers from some disturbingly prominent feature that distracts from whatever merits the work has, this feature might be toned down by choosing categories with respect to which it is standard, rather than variable or contra-standard. When the work is perceived in the new way the offending feature may be no more distracting than the flatness of a painting is to us. (b) If the work suffers from an overabundance of clichés it might be livened up by choosing categories with respect to which the clichés are variable or contra-standard rather than standard. (c) If it needs ingenuity we might devise a set of rules in terms of which the work finds itself in a dilemma and then ingeniously escapes from it, and build these rules into a set of

categories. Surely, however, if there are categories waiting to be discovered which would transform a mediocre work into a masterpiece, it does not follow that the work really is a hitherto unrecognized masterpiece. The fact that when perceived in such categories it would appear exciting, ingenious, and so forth, rather than grating, cliché-ridden, pedestrian, does not make it so. It *cannot* be correct, I suggest, to perceive a work in categories which are totally foreign to the artist and his society, even if it comes across as a masterpiece in them.²²

This brings us to the historical conditions (*iii*) and (*iv*). I see no way of avoiding the conclusion that one or the other of them at least is relevant in determining in what categories a work is correctly perceived. I consider both relevant, but will not argue here for the independent relevance of (*iv*). (*iii*) merits special attention in light of the recent prevalence of disputes about the importance of artists' intentions. To test the relevance of (*iii*) we must consider a case in which (*iii*) and (*iv*) diverge. One such instance occurred during the early days of the twelve-tone movement in music. Schoenberg no doubt intended even his earliest twelve-tone works to be heard as such. But this category was certainly not then well established or recognized in his society: virtually none of his contemporaries (except close associates such as Berg and Webern), even musically sophisticated ones, would have (or could have) heard these works in that category. But it seems to me that even the very first twelve-tone compositions are correctly heard as such, that the judgments one who hears them otherwise would make of them (for example, that they are chaotic, formless) are mistaken. I think this would be so even if Schoenberg had been working entirely alone, if *none* of his contemporaries had any inkling of the twelve-tone system. No doubt the first twelve-tone compositions are much better when heard in the category of twelve-tone works than when they are heard in any other way people might be likely to hear them. But as we have seen this cannot *by itself* account for the correctness of hearing them in the former way. The only other feature of the situation which could be relevant, so far as I can see, is Schoenberg's intention.

The above example is unusual in that Schoenberg was extraordinarily self-conscious about what he was doing, having explicitly formulated

rules – that is, specified standard properties – for twelve-tone composition. Artists are of course not often so self-conscious, even when producing revolutionary works of art. Their intentions as to which categories their works are to be perceived in are not nearly as clear as Schoenberg's were, and often they change their minds considerably during the process of creation. In such cases (as well as ones in which the artists' intentions are unknown) the question of what categories a work is correctly perceived in is, I think, left by default to condition (*iv*), together with (*i*) and (*ii*). But it seems to me that in almost all cases at least one of the historical conditions, (*iii*) and (*iv*), is of crucial importance.

My account of the rules governing decisions about what categories works are correctly perceived in leaves a lot undone. There are bound to be a large number of undecidable cases on my criteria. Artists' intentions are frequently unclear, variable, or undiscoverable. Many works belong to categories which are borderline cases of being well established in the artists' societies (perhaps, for example, the categories of rococo music – for instance, C. P. E. Bach – of music in the style of early Mozart, and of very thin metal sculptured figures of the kind that Giacometti made). Many works fall between well-established categories (for example, between impressionist and cubist paintings), possessing *some* of the standard features relative to each, and so neither clearly qualify nor clearly fail to qualify on the basis of condition (*i*) to be perceived in either. There is, in addition, the question of what relative weights to accord the various conditions when they conflict.

It would be a mistake, however, to try to tighten up much further the rules for deciding how works are correctly perceived. To do so would be simply to legislate gratuitously, since the intuitions and precedents we have to go on are highly variable and often confused. But it is important to notice just where these intuitions and precedents are inconclusive, for doing so will expose the sources of many critical disputes. One such dispute might well arise concerning Giacometti's thin metal sculptures. To a critic who sees them simply as sculptures, or sculptures of people, they look frail, emaciated, wispy, or wiry. But that is not how they would strike a critic who sees them in the category of thin metal sculptures

of that sort (just as stick figures do not strike us as wispy or emaciated). He would be impressed not by the thinness of the sculptures, but by the expressive nature of the positions of their limbs, and so forth, and so no doubt would attribute very different aesthetic properties to them. Which of the two ways of seeing these works is correct is, I suspect, undecidable. It is not clear whether enough such works have been made and have been regarded sufficiently often as constituting a category for that category to be deemed well established in Giacometti's society. And I doubt whether any of the other conditions settle the issue conclusively. So perhaps the dispute between the two critics is essentially unresolvable. The most that we can do is to point out just what sort of a difference of perception underlies the dispute, and why it is unresolvable.

The occurrence of such impasses is by no means something to be regretted. Works may be fascinating precisely because of shifts between equally permissible ways of perceiving them. And the enormous richness of some works is due in part to the variety of permissible, and worthwhile, ways of perceiving them. But it should be emphasized that even when my criteria do not clearly specify a *single* set of categories in which a work is correctly perceived, there are bound to be possible ways of perceiving it (which we may or may not have thought of) that they definitely rule out.

The question posed at the outset of this section was how to determine what aesthetic properties a work has, given that which ones it seems to have depends on what categories it is perceived in, on which of its properties are standard, which variable, and which contra-standard for us. I have sketched in rough outline rules for deciding in what categories a work is *correctly* perceived (and hence which of its features are absolutely standard, variable, and contra-standard). The aesthetic properties it actually possesses are those that are to be found in it when it is perceived correctly.²³

V. Conclusion

I return now to the issues raised in Section I. (I will adopt for the remainder of this paper the simplifying assumption that there is only one correct way of perceiving any work. Nothing

important depends on this.) If a work's aesthetic properties are those that are to be found in it when it is perceived correctly, and the correct way to perceive it is determined partly by historical facts about the artist's intention and/or his society, no examination of the work itself, however thorough, will by itself reveal those properties.²⁴ If we are confronted by a work about whose origins we know absolutely nothing (for example, one lifted from the dust at an as yet unexcavated archaeological site on Mars), we would simply not be in a position to judge it aesthetically. We could not possibly tell by staring at it, no matter how intently and intelligently, whether it is coherent, or serene, or dynamic, for by staring we cannot tell whether it is to be seen as a sculpture, a *guernica*, or some other exotic or mundane kind of work of art. (We could attribute aesthetic properties to it in the way we do to natural objects, which of course does not involve consideration of historical facts about artists or their societies. But to do this would not be to treat the object as a *work* of art.)

It should be emphasized that the relevant historical facts are not merely useful aids to aesthetic judgment; they do not simply provide hints concerning what might be found in the work. Rather they help to *determine* what aesthetic properties a work has; they, together with the work's nonaesthetic features, *make* it coherent, serene, or whatever. If the origin of a work which is coherent and serene had been different in crucial respects, the work would not have had these qualities; we would not merely have lacked a means for *discovering* them. And of two works which differ *only* in respect of their origins – that is, which are perceptually indistinguishable – one might be coherent or serene, and the other not. Thus, since artists' intentions are among the relevant historical considerations, the "intentional fallacy" is not a fallacy at all. I have of course made no claims about the relevance of artists' intentions as to the aesthetic properties that their works should have, and these intentions are among those most discussed in writings on aesthetics. I am willing to agree that whether an artist intended his work to be coherent or serene has nothing essential to do with whether it is coherent or serene. But this must not be allowed to seduce us into thinking that *no* intentions are relevant.

Aesthetic properties, then, are not to be found in works themselves in the straightforward way

that colors and shapes or pitches and rhythms are. But I do not mean to deny that we perceive aesthetic properties in works of art. I see the serenity of a painting, and hear the coherence of a sonata, despite the fact that the presence of these qualities in the works depends partly on circumstances of their origin, which I cannot (now) perceive. Jones's marital status is part of what makes him a bachelor, if he is one, and we cannot tell his marital status just by looking at him, though we can thus ascertain his sex. Hence, I suppose, his bachelorhood is not a property we can be said to perceive in him. But the aesthetic properties of a work do not depend on historical facts about it in anything like the way Jones's bachelorhood depends on his marital status. The point is not that the historical facts (or in what categories the work is correctly perceived, or which of its properties are absolutely standard, variable, and contra-standard) function as *grounds* in any ordinary sense for aesthetic judgments. By themselves they do not, in general, count either for or against the presence of any particular aesthetic property. And they are not part of a larger body of information (also including data about the work derived from an examination of it) from which conclusions about the work's aesthetic properties are to be deduced or inferred. We must learn to *perceive* the work in the correct categories, as determined in part by the historical facts, and judge it by what we then perceive in it. The historical facts help to determine whether a painting is, for example, serene *only* (as far as my arguments go) by affecting what way of perceiving the painting must reveal this quality if it is truly attributable to the work.

We must not, however, expect to judge a work simply by setting ourselves to perceive it correctly, once it is determined what the correct way of perceiving it is. For one cannot, in general, perceive a work in a given set of categories simply by setting himself to do it. I could not possibly, merely by an act of will, see "Guernica" as a *guernica* rather than a painting, or hear a succession of street sounds in any arbitrary category one might dream up, even if the category has been explained to me in detail. (Nor can I imagine except in a rather vague way what it would be like, for example, to see "Guernica" as a *guernica*.) One cannot merely decide to respond appropriately to a work – to be shocked or unnerved or surprised by its (absolutely) contra-standard features, to

find its standard features familiar or mundane, and to react to its variable features in other ways – once he knows the correct categories. Perceiving a work in a certain category or set of categories is a skill that must be acquired by training, and exposure to a great many other works of the category or categories in question is ordinarily, I believe, an essential part of this training. (But an effort of will may facilitate the training, and once the skill is acquired one may be able to decide at will whether or not to perceive it in that or those categories.) This has important consequences concerning how best to approach works of art of kinds that are new to us – contemporary works in new idioms, works from foreign cultures, or newly resurrected works from the ancient past. It is no use just immersing ourselves in a particular work, even with the knowledge of what categories it is correctly perceived in, for that alone will not enable us to perceive it in those categories. We must become familiar with a considerable variety of works of similar sorts.

When dealing with works of more familiar kinds it is not generally necessary to undertake deliberately the task of training ourselves to be able to perceive them in the correct categories (expect perhaps when those categories include relatively subtle ones). But this is almost always, I think, only because we have been trained unwittingly. Even the ability to see paintings as paintings had to be acquired, it seems to me, by repeated exposure to a great many paintings. The critic must thus go beyond the work before him in order to judge it aesthetically, not only to discover what the correct categories are, but also to be able to perceive it in them. The latter does not require consideration of historical facts, or consideration of facts at all, but it requires directing one's attention nonetheless to things other than the work in question.

Probably no one would deny that *some* sort of perceptual training is necessary, in many if not all instances, for apprehending a work's serenity or coherence, or other aesthetic properties. And of course it is not only *aesthetic* properties whose apprehension by the senses requires training. But the kind of training required in the aesthetic cases (and perhaps some others as well) has not been properly appreciated. In order to learn how to recognize gulls of various kinds, or the sex of chicks, or a certain person's handwriting, one must usually have gulls of those kinds, or chicks

of the two sexes, or examples of that person's handwriting pointed out to him, practice recognizing them himself, and be corrected when he makes mistakes. But the training important for discovering the serenity or coherence of a work of art that I have been discussing is not of this sort (though this sort of training might be important as well). Acquiring the ability to perceive a serene or coherent work in the correct categories is not a matter of having had serene or coherent things pointed out to one, or having practiced recognizing them. What is important is not (or not merely) experience with other serene and coherent things, but experience with other things of the appropriate categories.

Much of the argument in this paper has been directed against the seemingly common-sense notion that aesthetic judgments about works of art are to be based solely on what can be perceived in them, how they look or sound. That notion is seriously misleading, I claim, on two quite different counts. I do not deny that paintings and sonatas are to be judged solely on what can be seen or heard in them – when they are perceived correctly. But examining a work with the senses can by itself reveal neither how it is correct to perceive it, nor how to perceive it that way.

Notes

- 1 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, trans. by M. D. Hottinger (7th ed.; New York, 1929), p. 228.
- 2 "[W]e should all agree, I think, . . . that any quality that cannot even in principle be heard in it [a musical composition] does not belong to it as music." Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York, 1958), pp. 31–2.
- 3 Cf. Calvin Tompkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors* (New York, 1965), pp. 210–11.
- 4 Monroe Beardsley argues for a relatively strict separation (op. cit., pp. 17–34). Some of the strongest recent attempts to enforce this separation are to be found in discussions of the so-called "intentional fallacy," beginning with William Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *Sewanee Review*, LIV (1946), which has been widely cited and reprinted. Despite the name of the "fallacy" these discussions are not limited to consideration of the relevance of artists' intentions.
- 5 The aesthetic properties of works of literature are not happily called "perceptual." For reasons connected with this it is sometimes awkward to treat literature together with the visual arts and music. (The notion of perceiving a work in a category, to be introduced shortly, is not straightforwardly applicable to literary works.) Hence in this paper I will concentrate on visual and musical works, though I believe that the central points I make concerning them hold, with suitable modifications, for novels, plays, and poems as well.
- 6 Frank Sibley distinguishes between "aesthetic" and "nonaesthetic" terms and concepts in "Aesthetic Concepts," *Philosophical Review*, LXVIII (1959).
- 7 Cf. Paul Ziff, "Art and the 'Object of Art,'" in Ziff, *Philosophic Turnings* (Ithaca, NY, 1966), pp. 12–16 (originally published in *Mind*, N. S. LX [1951]).
- 8 "Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic," *Philosophical Review*, LXXII (1965).
- 9 This is a very difficult notion to make precise, and I do not claim to have succeeded entirely. But the following comments seem to me to go in the right direction, and, together with the examples in the next section, they should clarify it sufficiently for my present purposes.
- 10 In order to avoid excessive complexity and length, I am ignoring some considerations that might be important at a later stage of investigation. In particular, I think it would be important at some point to distinguish between different *degrees* or *levels* of standardness, variableness, and contra-standardness for a person; to speak, e.g., of features being *more* or *less* standard for him. At least two distinct sorts of grounds for such differences of degree should be recognized. (a) Distinctions between perceiving a work in a certain category to a greater and lesser extent should be allowed for, with corresponding differences of degree in the standardness for the perceiver of properties relative to that category. (b) A feature which is standard relative to more, and/or more specific, categories in which a person perceives the work should thereby count as more standard for him. Thus, if we see something as a painting and also as a French Impressionist painting, features standard relative to both categories are more standard for us than features standard relative only to the latter.
- 11 This excludes, e.g., the sense of "represent" in which a picture might represent justice or courage, and probably other senses as well.
- 12 This does not hold for the special case of photography. A photograph is a photograph of a woman no matter what it looks like, I take it, if a woman was in front of the lens when it was produced.

- 13 Nelson Goodman denies that resemblance is necessary for representation – and obviously not merely because of isolated or marginal examples of non-resembling representations (p. 5). I cannot treat his arguments here, but rather than reject *en masse* the common-sense beliefs that pictures do resemble significantly what they depict and that they depict what they do partly because of such resemblances, if Goodman advocates rejecting them, I prefer to recognize a sense of “resemblance” in which these beliefs are true. My disagreement with him is perhaps less sharp than it appears since, as will be evident, I am quite willing to grant that the relevant resemblances are “conventional.” Cf. Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis, 1968), p. 39, n. 31.
- 14 The connection between features variable for us and what the work looks like is by no means a straightforward or simple one, however. It may involve “rules” which are more or less “conventional” (e.g., the “laws” of perspective). Cf. E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (New York, 1960) and Nelson Goodman, *op cit*.
- 15 There is at least one group of exceptions to this. Obviously features of a work which are standard for us because they are standard relative to some *representational* category which we see it in – e.g., the category of nudes, still lifes, or landscapes – do help determine what the work looks like to us and what we take it to depict.
- 16 The presence of clichés in a work sometimes allows it to contain drastically disorderly elements without becoming chaotic or incoherent. Cf. Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art* (London, 1967), pp. 114–16.
- 17 The timing of the release of the key affects the tone’s length. Use of the sustaining pedal can lessen slightly a tone’s diminuendo by reinforcing its overtones with sympathetic vibrations from other strings. The rate of diminuendo is affected somewhat more drastically by the force with which the key is struck. The more forcefully it is struck the greater is the tone’s relative diminuendo. (Obviously the rate of diminuendo cannot be controlled in this way independently of the tone’s initial volume.) The successive tones of a melody can be made to overlap so that each tone’s sharp attack is partially obscured by the lingering end of the preceding tone. A melodic tone may also be reinforced after it begins by sympathetic vibrations from harmonically related accompanying figures, contributed by the composer.
- 18 “[T]he musical media we know thus far derive their whole character and their usefulness as musical media precisely from their limitations.” Roger Sessions, “Problems and Issues Facing the Composer Today,” in Paul Henry Lang, *Problems of Modern Music* (New York, 1960), p. 31.
- 19 One way to make electronic music sound fast would be to make it sound like some traditional instrument, thereby trading on the limitations of that instrument.
- 20 Cf. William W. Austin, *Music in the 20th Century* (New York, 1966), pp. 205–6; and Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1967), pp. 5, 8, 19.
- 21 I am ruling out the view that the notions of truth and falsity are not applicable to aesthetic judgments, on the ground that it would force us to reject so much of our normal discourse and common-sense intuitions about art that theoretical aesthetics, conceived as attempting to understand the institution of art, would hardly have left a recognizable subject matter to investigate. (Cf. the quotation from Wölfflin, above.)
- 22 To say that it is incorrect (in my sense) to perceive a work in certain categories is not necessarily to claim that one *ought not* to perceive it that way. I heartily recommend perceiving mediocre works in categories that make perceiving them worthwhile whenever possible. The point is that one is not likely to *judge* the work correctly when he perceives it incorrectly.
- 23 This is a considerable oversimplification. If there are two equally correct ways of perceiving a work, and it appears to have a certain aesthetic property perceived in one but not the other of them, does it actually possess this property or not? There is no easy general answer. Probably in some such cases the question is undecidable. But I think we would sometimes be willing to say that a work is, e.g., touching or serene if it seems so when perceived in one correct way (or, more hesitantly, that there is “something very touching, or serene, about it”), while allowing that it does not seem so when perceived in another way which we do not want to rule incorrect. In some cases works have aesthetic properties (e.g., intriguing, subtle, alive, interesting, deep) which are not apparent on perceiving it in any single acceptable way, but which depend on the multiplicity of acceptable ways of perceiving it and relations between them. None of these complications relieves the critic of the responsibility for determining in what way or ways it is correct to perceive a work.
- 24 But this, plus a general knowledge of what sorts of works were produced when and by whom, might.

The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude

George Dickie

Some recent articles¹ have suggested the unsatisfactoriness of the notion of the aesthetic attitude and it is now time for a fresh look at that encrusted article of faith. This conception has been valuable to aesthetics and criticism in helping wean them from a sole concern with beauty and related notions.² However, I shall argue that the aesthetic attitude is a myth and while, as G. Ryle has said, "Myths often do a lot of theoretical good while they are still new,"³ this particular one is no longer useful and in fact misleads aesthetic theory.

There is a range of theories which differ according to how strongly the aesthetic attitude is characterized. This variation is reflected in the language the theories employ. The strongest variety is Edward Bullough's theory of psychical distance, recently defended by Sheila Dawson.⁴ The central technical term of this theory is "distance" used as a verb to denote an action which either constitutes or is necessary for the aesthetic attitude. These theorists use such sentences as "He distanced (or failed to distance) the play." The second variety is widely held but has been defended most vigorously in recent years by

Jerome Stolnitz and Eliseo Vivas. The *central* technical term of this variety is "disinterested"⁵ used either as an adverb or as an adjective. This weaker theory speaks not of a special kind of action (distancing) but of an ordinary kind of action (attending) done in a certain way (disinterestedly). These first two versions are perhaps not as different as my classification suggests. However, the language of the two is different enough to justify separate discussions. My discussion of this second variety will for the most part make use of Jerome Stolnitz' book⁶ which is a thorough, consistent, and large-scale version of the attitude theory. The weakest version of the attitude theory can be found in Vincent Tomas' statement "If looking at a picture and attending closely to how it looks is not really to be in the aesthetic attitude, then what on earth is?"⁷ In the following I shall be concerned with the notion of *aesthetic* attitude and this notion may have little or no connection with the ordinary notion of an *attitude*.

I

Psychical distance, according to Bullough, is a psychological process by virtue of which a person *puts* some object (be it a painting, a play, or a dangerous fog at sea) "out of gear" with the practical interests of the self. Miss Dawson maintains

that it is "the beauty of the phenomenon, which captures our attention, puts us out of gear with practical life, and forces us, if we are receptive, to view it on the level of aesthetic consciousness."⁸

Later she maintains that some persons (critics, actors, members of an orchestra, and the like) "distance deliberately."⁹ Miss Dawson, following Bullough, discusses cases in which people are unable to bring off an act of distancing or are incapable of being induced into a state of being distanced. She uses Bullough's example of the jealous ("under-distanced") husband at a performance of *Othello* who is unable to keep his attention on the play because he keeps thinking of his own wife's suspicious behavior. On the other hand, if "we are mainly concerned with the technical details of its [the play's] presentation, then we are said to be over-distanced."¹⁰ There is, then, a species of action – distancing – which may be deliberately done and which initiates a state of consciousness – being distanced.

The question is: Are there actions denoted by "to distance" or states of consciousness denoted by "being distanced"? When the curtain goes up, when we walk up to a painting, or when we look at a sunset are we ever induced into a state of being distanced either by being struck by the beauty of the object or by pulling off an act of distancing? I do not recall committing any such special actions or of being induced into any special state, and I have no reason to suspect that I am atypical in this respect. The distance-theorist may perhaps ask, "But are you not usually oblivious to noises and sights other than those of the play or to the marks on the wall around the painting?" The answer is of course – "Yes." But if "to distance" and "being distanced" simply mean that one's attention is focused, what is the point of introducing new technical terms and speaking as if these terms refer to special kinds of acts and states of consciousness? The distance-theorist might argue further, "But surely you put the play (painting, sunset) 'out of gear' with your practical interests?" This question seems to me to be a very odd way of asking (by employing the technical metaphor "out of gear") if I attended to the play rather than thought about my wife or wondered how they managed to move the scenery about. Why not ask me straight out if I paid attention? Thus, when Miss Dawson says that the jealous husband under-distanced *Othello* and that the

person with a consuming interest in techniques of stagecraft over-distanced the play, these are just technical and misleading ways of describing two different cases of inattention. In both cases something is being attended to, but in neither case is it the action of the play. To introduce the technical terms "distance," "under-distance," and "over-distance" does nothing but send us chasing after phantom acts and states of consciousness.

Miss Dawson's commitment to the theory of distance (as a kind of mental insulation material necessary for a work of art if it is to be enjoyed aesthetically) leads her to draw a conclusion so curious as to throw suspicion on the theory.

One remembers the horrible loss of distance in *Peter Pan* – the moment when Peter says "Do you believe in fairies? . . . If you believe, clap your hands!" the moment when most children would like to slink out of the theatre and not a few cry – not because Tinkerbelle may die, but because the magic is gone. What, after all, should we feel like if Lear were to leave Cordelia, come to the front of the stage and say, "All the grown-ups who think that she loves me, shout 'Yes'."¹¹

It is hard to believe that the responses of any children could be as theory-bound as those Miss Dawson describes. In fact, *Peter Pan*'s request for applause is a dramatic high point to which children respond enthusiastically. The playwright gives the children a momentary chance to become actors in the play. The children do not at that moment lose or snap out of a state of being distanced because they never had or were in any such thing to begin with. The comparison of *Peter Pan*'s appeal to the hypothetical one by Lear is pointless. *Peter Pan* is a magical play in which almost anything can happen, but *King Lear* is a play of a different kind. There are, by the way, many plays in which an actor directly addresses the audience (*Our Town*, *The Marriage Broker*, *A Taste of Honey*, for example) without causing the play to be less valuable. Such plays are unusual, but what is unusual is not necessarily bad; there is no point in trying to lay down rules to which every play must conform independently of the kind of play it is.

It is perhaps worth noting that Susanne Langer reports the reaction she had as a child to this

scene in *Peter Pan*.¹² As she remembers it, Peter Pan's appeal shattered the illusion and caused her acute misery. However, she reports that all the other children clapped and laughed and enjoyed themselves.

II

The second way of conceiving of the aesthetic attitude – as the ordinary action of attending done in a certain way (disinterestedly) – is illustrated by the work of Jerome Stolnitz and Eliseo Vivas. Stolnitz defines “aesthetic attitude” as “disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone.”¹³ Stolnitz defines the main terms of his definition: “disinterested” means “no concern for any ulterior purpose”;¹⁴ “sympathetic” means “accept the object on its own terms to appreciate it”;¹⁵ and “contemplation” means “perception directed toward the object in its own right and the spectator is not concerned to analyze it or ask questions about it.”¹⁶

The notion of disinterestedness, which Stolnitz has elsewhere shown¹⁷ to be seminal for modern aesthetic theory, is the key term here. Thus, it is necessary to be clear about the nature of disinterested attention to the various arts. It can make sense to speak, for example, of listening disinterestedly to music only if it makes sense to speak of listening interestedly to music. It would make no sense to speak of walking *fast* unless walking could be done *slowly*. Using Stolnitz' definition of “disinterestedness,” the two situations would have to be described as “listening with no ulterior purpose” (disinterestedly) and “listening with an ulterior purpose” (interestedly). Note that what initially appears to be a perceptual distinction – listening in a certain way (interestedly or disinterestedly) – turns out to be a motivational or an intentional distinction – listening for or with a certain purpose. Suppose Jones listens to a piece of music for the purpose of being able to analyze and describe it on an examination the next day and Smith listens to the same music with no such ulterior purpose. There is certainly a difference between the motives and intentions of the two men: Jones has an ulterior purpose and Smith does not, but this does not

mean Jones's *listening* differs from Smith's. It is possible that both men enjoy the music or that both be bored. The attention of either or both may flag and so on. It is important to note that a person's motive or intention is different from his action (Jones's listening to the music, for example). There is only one way to *listen* to (to attend to) music, although the listening may be more or less attentive and there may be a variety of motives, intentions, and reasons for doing so and a variety of ways of being distracted from the music.

In order to avoid a common mistake of aestheticians – drawing a conclusion about one kind of art and assuming it holds for all the arts – the question of disinterested attention must be considered for arts other than music. How would one look at a painting disinterestedly or interestedly? An example of alleged interested viewing might be the case in which a painting reminds Jones of his grandfather and Jones proceeds to muse about or to regale a companion with tales of his grandfather's pioneer exploits. Such incidents would be characterized by attitude-theorists as examples of using a work of art as a vehicle for associations and so on, i.e., cases of interested attention. But Jones is not looking at (attending to) the painting at all, although he may be facing it with his eyes open. Jones is now musing or attending to the story he is telling, although he had to look at the painting at first to notice that it resembled his grandfather. Jones is not now looking at the painting interestedly, since he is not now looking at (attending to) the painting. Jones's thinking or telling a story about his grandfather is no more a part of the painting than his speculating about the artist's intentions is and, hence, his musing, telling, speculating, and so on cannot properly be described as attending to the painting interestedly. What attitude-aestheticians are calling attention to is the occurrence of irrelevant associations which distract the viewer from the painting or whatever. But distraction is not a special kind of attention, it is a kind of inattention.

Consider now disinterestedness and plays. I shall make use of some interesting examples offered by J. O. Urmson,¹⁸ but I am not claiming that Urmson is an attitude-theorist. Urmson never speaks in his article of aesthetic attitude but rather of aesthetic satisfaction. In addition to

aesthetic satisfaction, Urmson mentions economic, moral, personal, and intellectual satisfactions. I think the attitude-theorist would consider these last four kinds of satisfaction as "ulterior purposes" and, hence, cases of interested attention. Urmson considers the case of a man in the audience of a play who is delighted.¹⁹ It is discovered that his delight is *solely* the result of the fact that there is a full house – the man is the impresario of the production. Urmson is right in calling *this* impresario's satisfaction economic rather than aesthetic, although there is a certain oddness about the example as it finds the impresario sitting *in the audience*. However, my concern is not with Urmson's examples as such but with the attitude theory. This impresario is certainly an interested party in the fullest sense of the word, but is his behavior an instance of interested attention as distinct from the supposed disinterested attention of the average citizen who sits beside him? In the situation as described by Urmson it would not make any sense to say that the impresario is attending to the play at all, since his *sole* concern at the moment is the till. If he can be said to be attending to anything (rather than just thinking about it) it is the size of the house. I do not mean to suggest that an impresario could not attend to his play if he found himself taking up a seat in a full house; I am challenging the sense of disinterested attention. As an example of personal satisfaction Urmson mentions the spectator whose daughter is in the play. Intellectual satisfaction involves the solution of technical problems of plays and moral satisfaction the consideration of the effects of the play on the viewer's conduct. All three of these candidates which the attitude-theorist would propose as cases of interested attention turn out to be just different ways of being distracted from the play and, hence, not cases of interested attention to the play. Of course, there is no reason to think that in any of these cases the distraction or inattention must be total, although it could be. In fact, such inattentions often occur but are so fleeting that nothing of the play, music, or whatever is missed or lost.

The example of a playwright watching a rehearsal or an out-of-town performance with a view to rewriting the script has been suggested to me as a case in which a spectator is certainly attending to the play (unlike our impresario) and

attending in an interested manner. This case is unlike those just discussed but is similar to the earlier case of Jones (not Smith) listening to a particular piece of music. Our playwright – like Jones, who was to be examined on the music – has ulterior motives. Furthermore, the playwright, unlike an ordinary spectator, can change the script after the performance or during a rehearsal. But how is our playwright's *attention* (as distinguished from his motives and intentions) different from that of an ordinary viewer? The playwright might enjoy or be bored by the performance as any spectator might be. The playwright's attention might even flag. In short, the kinds of things which may happen to the playwright's attention are no different from those that may happen to an ordinary spectator, although the two may have quite different motives and intentions.

For the discussion of disinterested-interested reading of literature it is appropriate to turn to the arguments of Eliseo Vivas whose work is largely concerned with literature. Vivas remarks that "By approaching a poem in a nonaesthetic mode it may function as history, as social criticism, as diagnostic evidence of the author's neuroses, and in an indefinite number of other ways."²⁰ Vivas further notes that according to Plato "the Greeks used Homer as an authority on war and almost anything under the sun," and that a certain poem "can be read as erotic poetry or as an account of a mystical experience."²¹ The difference between reading a poem *as* history or whatever (reading it nonaesthetically) and reading it aesthetically depends on how *we* approach or read it. A poem "does not come self-labelled,"²² but presumably is a poem only when it is read in a certain way – when it is an object of aesthetic experience. For Vivas, being an aesthetic object means being the object of the aesthetic attitude. He defines the aesthetic experience as "an experience of rapt attention which involves the intransitive apprehension of an object's immanent meanings and values in their full presentational immediacy."²³ Vivas maintains that his definition "helps me understand better what I can and what I cannot do when I read *The Brothers [Karamazov]*" and his definition "forces us to acknowledge that *The Brothers Karamazov* can hardly be read as art. . . ."²⁴ This acknowledgment means that we probably cannot

intransitively apprehend *The Brothers* because of its size and complexity.

"Intransitive" is the key term here and Vivas' meaning must be made clear. A number of passages reveal his meaning but perhaps the following is the best. "Having once seen a hockey game in slow motion, I am prepared to testify that it was an object of pure intransitive experience [attention] – for I was not *interested* in which team won the game and no external factors mingled with my interest in the beautiful rhythmic flow of the slow-moving men."²⁵ It appears that Vivas' "intransitive attention" has the same meaning as Stolnitz' "disinterested attention," namely, "attending with no ulterior purpose."²⁶ Thus, the question to ask is "How does one attend to (read) a poem or any literary work transitively?" One can certainly attend to (read) a poem for a variety of different purposes and because of a variety of different reasons, but can one attend to a poem transitively? I do not think so, but let us consider the examples Vivas offers. He mentions "a type of reader" who uses a poem or parts of a poem as a spring-board for "loose, uncontrolled, relaxed day-dreaming, wool-gathering rambles, free from the contextual control" of the poem.²⁷ But surely it would be wrong to say such musing is a case of transitively attending to a poem, since it is clearly a case of not attending to a poem. Another supposed way of attending to a poem transitively is by approaching it "as diagnostic evidence of the author's neuroses." Vivas is right if he means that there is no critical point in doing this since it does not throw light on the poem. But this is a case of *using* information gleaned from a poem to make inferences about its author rather than attending to a poem. If anything can be said to be attended to here it is the author's neuroses (at least they are being thought about). This kind of case is perhaps best thought of as a rather special way of getting distracted from a poem. Of course, such "biographical" distractions might be insignificant and momentary enough so as scarcely to distract attention from the poem (a flash of insight or understanding about the poet). On the other hand, such distractions may turn into dissertations and whole careers. Such an interest may lead a reader to concentrate his attention (when he does read a poem) on certain "informational" aspects of a poem and to ignore the remaining

aspects. As deplorable as such a sustained practice may be, it is at best a case of attending to certain features of a poem and ignoring others.

Another way that poetry may allegedly be read transitively is by reading it as history. This case is different from the two preceding ones since poetry often *contains* history (makes historical statements or at least references) but does not (usually) contain statements about the author's neuroses and so on nor does it contain statements about what a reader's free associations are about (otherwise we would not call them "*free* associations"). Reading a poem as history suggests that we are attending to (thinking about) historical events by way of attending to a poem – the poem is a time-telescope. Consider the following two sets of lines:

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific – and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise –
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Someone might read both of these raptly and not know that they make historical references (inaccurately in one case) – might this be a case of intransitive attention? How would the above readings differ – so far as attention is concerned – from the case of a reader who recognized the historical content of the poetic lines? The two readings do not differ as far as attention is concerned. History in a part of these sets of poetic lines and the two readings differ in that the first fails to take account of an aspect of the poetic lines (its historical content) and the second does not fail to do so. Perhaps by "reading as history" Vivas means "reading *simply* as history." But even this meaning does not mark out a special kind of attention but rather means that only a single aspect of a poem is being noticed and that its rhyme, meter, and so on are ignored. Reading a poem as social criticism can be analyzed in a fashion similar to reading as history. Some poems simply are or contain social criticism, and a complete reading must not fail to notice this fact.

The above cases of alleged interested attending can be sorted out in the following way. Jones listening to the music and our playwright watching the rehearsal are both attending with ulterior

motives to a work of art, but there is no reason to suppose that the attention of either is different in kind from that of an ordinary spectator. The reader who reads a poem as history is simply attending to an aspect of a poem. On the other hand, the remaining cases – Jones beside the painting telling of his grandfather, the gloating impresario, daydreaming while “reading” a poem, and so on – are simply cases of not attending to the work of art.

In general, I conclude that “disinterestedness” or “intransitiveness” cannot properly be used to refer to a special kind of attention. “Disinterestedness” is a term which is used to make clear that an action has certain kinds of motives. Hence, we speak of disinterested findings (of boards of inquiry), disinterested verdicts (of judges and juries), and so on. Attending to an object, of course, has its motives but the attending itself is not interested or disinterested according to whether its motives are of the kind which motivate interested or disinterested action (as findings and verdicts might), although the attending may be more or less close.

I have argued that the second way of conceiving the aesthetic attitude is also a myth, or at least that its main content – disinterested attention – is; but I must now try to establish that the view misleads aesthetic theory. I shall argue that the attitude-theorist is incorrect about (1) the way in which he wishes to set the limits of aesthetic relevance; (2) the relation of the critic to a work of art; and (3) the relation of morality to aesthetic value.

Since I shall make use of the treatment of aesthetic relevance in Jerome Stolnitz’ book, let me make clear that I am not necessarily denying the relevance of the specific items he cites but disagreeing with his criterion of relevance. His criterion of relevance is derived from his definition of “aesthetic attitude” and is set forth at the very beginning of his book. This procedure leads Monroe Beardsley in his review of the book to remark that Stolnitz’ discussion is premature.²⁸ Beardsley suggests “that relevance cannot be satisfactorily discussed until after a careful treatment of the several arts, their dimensions and capacities.”²⁹

First, what is meant by “aesthetic relevance”? Stolnitz defines the problem by asking the question: “Is it ever ‘relevant’ to the aesthetic

experience to have thoughts or images or bits of knowledge which are not present within the object itself?”³⁰ Stolnitz begins by summarizing Bullough’s experiment and discussion of single colors and associations.³¹ Some associations absorb the spectator’s attention and distract him from the color and some associations “fuse” with the color. Associations of the latter kind are aesthetic and the former are not. Stolnitz draws the following conclusion about associations:

If the aesthetic experience is as we have described it, then whether an association is aesthetic depends on whether it is compatible with the attitude of “disinterested attention.” If the association re-enforces the focusing of attention upon the object, by “fusing” with the object and thereby giving it added “life and significance,” it is genuinely aesthetic. If, however, it arrogates attention to itself and away from the object, it undermines the aesthetic attitude.³²

It is not clear how something could *fuse* with a single color, but “fusion” is one of those words in aesthetics which is rarely defined. Stolnitz then makes use of a more fruitful example, one from I. A. Richards’ *Practical Criticism*.³³ He cites the responses of students to the poem which begins:

Between the erect and solemn trees
I will go down upon my knees;
I shall not find this day
So meet a place to pray.

The image of a rugby forward running arose in the mind of one student-reader on reading the third verse of this poem. A cathedral was suggested to a second reader of the poem. The cathedral image “is congruous with both the verbal meaning of the poem and the emotions and mood which it expresses. It does not divert attention away from the poem.”³⁴ The rugby image is presumably incongruous and diverts attention from the poem.

It is a confusion to take compatibility with disinterested attention as a criterion of relevance. If, as I have tried to show, *disinterested attention* is a confused notion, then it will not do as a satisfactory criterion. Also, when Stolnitz comes to show why the cathedral image is, and the rugby image is not relevant, the criterion he actually

uses is *congruousness with the meaning of the poem*, which is quite independent of the notion of disinterestedness. The problem is perhaps best described as the problem of relevance to a poem, or more generally, to a work of art, rather than aesthetic relevance.

A second way in which the attitude theory misleads aesthetics is its contention that a critic's relationship to a work of art is different in kind from the relationship of other persons to the work. H. S. Langfeld in an early statement of this view wrote that we may "slip from the attitude of aesthetic enjoyment to the attitude of the critic." He characterizes the critical attitude as "intellectually occupied in coldly estimating . . . merits" and the aesthetic attitude as responding "emotionally to" a work of art.³⁵ At the beginning of his book in the discussion of the aesthetic attitude, Stolnitz declares that if a percipient of a work of art "has the purpose of passing judgment upon it, his attitude is not aesthetic."³⁶ He develops this line at a later stage of his book, arguing that appreciation (perceiving with the aesthetic attitude) and criticism (seeking for reasons to support an evaluation of a work) are (1) distinct and (2) "psychologically opposed to each other."³⁷ The critical attitude is questioning, analytical, probing for strengths and weakness, and so on. The aesthetic attitude is just the opposite: "It commits our allegiance to the object freely and unquestioningly"; "the spectator 'surrenders' himself to the work of art."³⁸ "Just because the two attitudes are inimical, whenever criticism obtrudes, it reduces aesthetic interest."³⁹ Stolnitz does not, of course, argue that criticism is unimportant for appreciation. He maintains criticism plays an important and necessary role in preparing a person to appreciate the nuances, detail, form, and so on of works of art. We are quite right, he says, thus to read and listen perceptively and acutely, but he questions, "Does this mean that we must analyze, measure in terms of value-criteria, etc., *during* the supposedly aesthetic experience?"⁴⁰ His answer is "No" and he maintains that criticism must occur "*prior* to the aesthetic encounter,"⁴¹ or it will interfere with appreciation.

How does Stolnitz know that criticism will always interfere with appreciation? His conclusion sounds like one based upon the observations of actual cases, but I do not think it is. I believe

it is a logical consequence of his definition of aesthetic attitude in terms of disinterested attention (no ulterior purpose). According to his view, to appreciate an object aesthetically one has to perceive it with no ulterior purpose. But the critic has an ulterior purpose – to analyze and evaluate the object he perceives – hence, in so far as a person functions as a critic he cannot function as an appreciator. But here, as previously, Stolnitz confuses a perceptual distinction with a motivational one. If it were possible to *attend* disinterestedly or interestedly, then perhaps the critic (as percipient) would differ from other percipients. But if my earlier argument about attending is correct, the critic differs from other percipients only in his motives and intentions and not in the way in which he attends to a work of art.

Of course, it might just be a fact that the search for reasons is incompatible with the appreciation of art, but I do not think it is. Several years ago I participated in a series of panel discussions of films. During the showing of each film we were to discuss, I had to take note of various aspects of the film (actor's performance, dramatic development, organization of the screen-plane and screen-space at given moments, and so on) in order later to discuss the films. I believe that this practice not only helped educate me to appreciate subsequent films but that it enhanced the appreciation of the films I was analyzing. I noticed and was able to appreciate things about the films I was watching which ordinarily out of laziness I would not have noticed. I see no reason why the same should not be the case with the professional critic or any critical percipient. If many professional critics seem to appreciate so few works, it is not because they are critics, but perhaps because the percentage of good works of art is fairly small and they suffer from a kind of combat fatigue.

I am unable to see any significant difference between "perceptively and acutely" attending to a work of art (which Stolnitz holds enhances appreciation) and searching for reasons, so far as the experience of a work of art is concerned. If I attend perceptively and acutely, I will have certain standards and/or paradigms in mind (not necessarily consciously) and will be keenly aware of the elements and relations in the work and will evaluate them to some degree. Stolnitz writes as if criticism takes place and then is over and done with, but the search for and finding of reasons

(noticing this fits in with that, and so on) is continuous in practiced appreciators. A practiced viewer does not even have to be looking for a reason, he may just notice a line or an area in a painting, for example, and the line or area becomes a reason why he thinks the painting better or worse. A person may be a critic (not necessarily a good one) without meaning to be or without even realizing it.

There is one final line worth pursuing. Stolnitz' remarks suggest that one reason he thinks criticism and appreciation incompatible is that they compete with one another for time (this would be especially bad in the cases of performed works). But seeking and finding reasons (criticism) does not compete for time with appreciation. First, to seek for a reason means to be ready and able to notice something and to be thus ready and able as one attends does not compete for time with the attending. In fact, I should suppose that seeking for reasons would tend to focus attention more securely on the work of art. Second, finding a reason is an achievement, like winning a race. (It takes time to run a race but not to win it.) Consider the finding of the following reasons. How much time does it take to "see" that a note is off key (or on key)? How long does it take to notice that an actor mispronounces a word (or does it right)? How much time does it take to realize that a character's action does not fit his already established personality? (One is struck by it.) How long does it take to apprehend that a happy ending is out of place? It does not take time to find any of these reasons or reasons in general. Finding a reason is like coming to understand – it is done in a flash. I do not mean to suggest that one cannot be mistaken in finding a reason. What may appear to be a fault or a merit (a found reason) in the middle of a performance (or during one look at a painting and so forth) may turn out to be just the opposite when seen from the perspective of the whole performance (or other looks at the painting).

A third way in which the attitude theory misleads aesthetic theory is its contention that aesthetic value is always independent of morality. This view is perhaps not peculiar to the attitude theory, but it is a logical consequence of the attitude approach. Two quotations from attitude-theorists will establish the drift of their view of morality and aesthetic value.

We are either concerned with the beauty of the object or with some other value of the same. Just as soon, for example, as ethical considerations occur to our mind, our attitude shifts.⁴²

Any of us might reject a novel because it seems to conflict with our moral beliefs . . . When we do so . . . We have *not* read the book aesthetically, for we have interposed moral . . . responses of our own which are alien to it. This disrupts the aesthetic attitude. We cannot then say that the novel is *aesthetically* bad, for we have not permitted ourselves to consider it aesthetically. To maintain the aesthetic attitude, we must follow the lead of the object and respond in concert with it.⁴³

This conception of the aesthetic attitude functions to hold the moral aspects and the *aesthetic* aspects of the work of art firmly apart. Presumably, although it is difficult to see one's way clearly here, the moral aspects of a work of art cannot be an object of aesthetic attention because aesthetic attention is by definition disinterested and the moral aspects are somehow practical (interested). I suspect that there are a number of confusions involved in the assumption of the incompatibility of aesthetic attention and the moral aspects of art, but I shall not attempt to make these clear, since the root of the assumption – disinterested attention – is a confused notion. Some way other than in terms of the aesthetic attitude, then, is needed to discuss the relation of morality and aesthetic value.

David Pole in a recent article⁴⁴ has argued that the moral vision which a work of art may embody is *aesthetically* significant. It should perhaps be remarked at this point that not all works of art embody a moral vision and perhaps some kinds of art (music, for example) cannot embody a moral vision, but certainly some novels, some poems, and some films and plays do. I assume it is unnecessary to show how novels and so on have this moral aspect. Pole notes the curious fact that while so many critics approach works of art in "overtly moralistic terms," it is a "philosophical commonplace . . . that the ethical and the aesthetic modes . . . form different categories."⁴⁵ I suspect that many philosophers would simply say that these critics are confused about their roles. But Pole assumes that philosophical theory "should take notice of practice"⁴⁶ and surely he is right. In agreeing with Pole's assumption I should

like to reserve the right to argue in specific cases that a critic may be misguided. This right is especially necessary in a field such as aesthetics because the language and practice of critics is so often burdened with ancient theory. Perhaps *all* moralistic criticism is wrong but philosophers should not rule it out of order at the very beginning by use of a definition.

Pole thinks that the moral vision presented by a particular work of art will be either true or false (perhaps a mixture of true and false might occur). If a work has a false moral vision, then something "is lacking within the work itself. But to say that is to say that the [work] is internally incoherent; some particular aspect must jar with what – on the strength of the rest – we claim a right to demand. And here the moral fault that we have found will count as an aesthetic fault too."⁴⁷ Pole is trying to show that the assessment of the moral vision of a work of art is just a special case of coherence or incoherence, and since everyone would agree that coherence is an aesthetic category, the assessment of the moral vision is an aesthetic assessment.

I think Pole's conclusion is correct but take exception to some of his arguments. First, I am uncertain whether it is proper to speak of a moral vision being true or false, and would want to make a more modest claim – that a moral vision can be judged to be acceptable or unacceptable. (I am not claiming Pole is wrong and my claim is not inconsistent with his.) Second, I do not see that a false (or unacceptable) moral vision makes a work incoherent. I should suppose that to say a work is coherent or incoherent is to speak about how its parts fit together and this involves no reference to something outside the work as the work's truth or falsity does.

In any event, it seems to me that a faulty moral vision can be shown to be an aesthetic fault independently of Pole's consideration of truth and coherence. As Pole's argument implies, a work's moral vision is a *part* of the work. Thus, any statement – descriptive or evaluative – about the work's moral vision is a statement about the *work*; and any statement about a *work* is a critical statement and, hence, falls within the aesthetic domain. To judge a moral vision to be morally unacceptable is to judge it defective and this amounts to saying that the work of art has a defective part. (Of course, a judgment of the acceptability of a moral

vision may be wrong, as a judgment of an action sometimes is, but this fallibility does not make any difference.) Thus, a work's moral vision may be an aesthetic merit or defect just as a work's degree of unity is a merit or defect. But what justifies saying that a moral vision is a part of a work of art? Perhaps "part" is not quite the right word but it serves to make the point clear enough. A novel's moral vision is an essential part of the novel and if it were removed (I am not sure how such surgery could be carried out) the novel would be greatly changed. Anyway, a novel's moral vision is not like its covers or binding. However, someone might still argue that even though a work's moral vision is defective and the moral vision is part of the work, that this defect is not an *aesthetic* defect. How is "aesthetic" being used here? It is being used to segregate certain aspects or parts of works of art such as formal and stylistic aspects from such aspects as a work's moral vision. But it seems to me that the separation is only nominal. "Aesthetic" has been selected as a name for a certain sub-set of characteristics of works of art. I certainly cannot object to such a stipulation, since an underlying aim of this essay is to suggest the vacuousness of the term "aesthetic." My concern at this point is simply to insist that a work's moral vision is a part of the work and that, therefore, a critic can legitimately describe and evaluate it. I would *call* any defect or merit which a critic can legitimately point out an aesthetic defect or merit, but what we call it does not matter.

It would, of course, be a mistake to judge a work solely on the basis of its moral vision (it is only one part). The fact that some critics have judged works of art in this way is perhaps as much responsible as the theory of aesthetic attitude for the attempts to separate morality from the aesthetic. In fact, such criticism is no doubt at least partly responsible for the rise of the notion of the aesthetic attitude.

If the foregoing arguments are correct, the second way of conceiving the aesthetic attitude misleads aesthetic theory in at least three ways.

III

In answer to a hypothetical question about what is seen in viewing a portrait with the aesthetic attitude, Tomas in part responds "If looking at a

picture and attending closely to how it looks is not really to be in the aesthetic attitude, then what on earth is?"⁴⁸ I shall take this sentence as formulating the weakest version of the aesthetic attitude. (I am ignoring Tomas' distinction between appearance and reality. See note 7. My remarks, thus, are not a critique of Tomas' argument; I am simply using one of his sentences.) First, this sentence speaks only of "looking at a picture," but "listening to a piece of music," "watching and listening to a play," and so on could be added easily enough. After thus expanding the sentence, it can be contracted into the general form: "Being in the aesthetic attitude is attending closely to a work of art (or a natural object)."

But the aesthetic attitude ("the hallmark of modern aesthetics") in this formulation is a great letdown – it no longer seems to say anything significant. Nevertheless, this does seem to be all that is left after the aesthetic attitude has been purged of *distancing* and *disinterestedness*. The only thing which prevents the aesthetic attitude from collapsing into simple attention is the qualification *closely*. One may, I suppose, attend to a work of art more or less closely, but this fact does not seem to signify anything very important. When "being in the aesthetic attitude" is equated with "attending (closely)," the equation neither involves any mythical element nor could it possibly mislead aesthetic theory. But if the definition has no vices, it seems to have no virtues either. When the aesthetic attitude finally turns out to be simply attending (closely), the final version should perhaps not be called "the weakest" but rather "the vacuous version" of the aesthetic attitude.

Stolnitz is no doubt historically correct that the notion of the aesthetic attitude has played an important role in the freeing of aesthetic theory from an overweening concern with beauty. It is easy to see how the slogan, "Anything can become an object of the aesthetic attitude," could help accomplish this liberation. It is worth noting, however, that the same goal could have been (and perhaps to some extent was) realized by simply noting that works of art are often ugly or contain ugliness, or have features which are difficult to include within beauty. No doubt, in more recent times people have been encouraged to *take an aesthetic attitude toward a painting* as a way of

lowering their prejudices, say, against abstract and non-objective art. So if the notion of aesthetic attitude has turned out to have no theoretical value for aesthetics, it has had practical value for the appreciation of art in a way similar to that of Clive Bell's suspect notion of significant form.

Notes

- 1 See Marshall Cohen, "Appearance and the Aesthetic Attitude," *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 56 (1959), p. 926; and Joseph Margolis, "Aesthetic Perception," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 19 (1960), p. 211. Margolis gives an argument, but it is so compact as to be at best only suggestive.
- 2 Jerome Stolnitz, "Some Questions Concerning Aesthetic Perception," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 22 (1961), p. 69.
- 3 *The Concept of Mind* (London, 1949), p. 23.
- 4 "'Distancing' as an Aesthetic Principle," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 39 (1961), pp. 155–74.
- 5 "Disinterested" is Stolnitz' term. Vivas uses "intransitive."
- 6 *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism* (Boston, 1960), p. 510.
- 7 "Aesthetic Vision," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 68 (1959), p. 63. I shall ignore Tomas' attempt to distinguish between appearance and reality since it seems to confuse rather than clarify aesthetic theory. See F. Sibley, "Aesthetics and the Looks of Things," *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 56 (1959), pp. 905–15; M. Cohen, *op. cit.*, pp. 915–26; and J. Stolnitz, "Some Questions Concerning Aesthetic Perception," *op. cit.*, pp. 69–87. Tomas discusses only visual art and the aesthetic attitude, but his remarks could be generalized into a comprehensive theory.
- 8 Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 159–60.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 168.
- 12 *Feeling and Form* (New York, 1953), p. 318.
- 13 *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism*, pp. 34–5.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 17 "On the Origins of 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness,'" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 20 (1961), pp. 131–43.

- 18 "What Makes a Situation Aesthetic?" in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, Joseph Margolis (ed.) (New York, 1962). Reprinted from *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume* 31 (1957), pp. 75–92.
- 19 Ibid., p. 15.
- 20 Contextualism Reconsidered," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 18 (1959), pp. 224–5.
- 21 Ibid., p. 225.
- 22 Loc. cit.
- 23 Ibid., p. 227.
- 24 Ibid., p. 237.
- 25 Ibid., p. 228. (Italics mine.)
- 26 Vivas' remark about the improbability of being able to read *The Brothers Karamazov* as art suggests that "intransitive attention" may sometimes mean for him "that which can be attended to at one time" or "that which can be held before the mind at one time." However, this second possible meaning is not one which is relevant here.
- 27 Vivas. op. cit., p. 231.
- 28 *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 57 (1960), p. 624.
- 29 Loc. cit.
- 30 Op. cit., p. 53.
- 31 Ibid., p. 54.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 54–5.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 55–6.
- 34 Ibid., p. 56.
- 35 *The Aesthetic Attitude* (New York, 1920), p. 79.
- 36 Op. cit., p. 35.
- 37 Ibid., p. 377.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 377–8.
- 39 Ibid., p. 379.
- 40 Ibid., p. 380.
- 41 Loc. cit.
- 42 H. S. Langfeld, op. cit., p. 73.
- 43 J. Stolnitz, op. cit., p. 36.
- 44 "Morality and the Assessment of Literature," *Philosophy*, vol. 37 (1962), pp. 193–207.
- 45 Ibid., p. 193.
- 46 Loc. cit.
- 47 Ibid., p. 206.
- 48 Tomas, op. cit., p. 63.

What is Aesthetic Experience?

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Contrasting Accounts

Accounts of aesthetic experience divide into three kinds. The first focuses on the objective side, the content of aesthetic experience. The second focuses on the subjective, phenomenological nature of the experience itself. We can call these the objective and subjective accounts.¹ The third characterizes the experience as that which is valued in itself. As the valuing is presumably not a feature of the experience itself as it occurs, but an external attitude subjects are supposed to have toward that experience, we can call it the external attitude account. While perhaps most common, this last variety is also the easiest to dismiss, as it does very little to distinguish aesthetic experience from other kinds. We can value other sorts of experience for themselves, for example the experience of playing sports, relaxing, and so on. Valuing in itself is not sufficient for aesthetic experience. Nor is it necessary. A somewhat jaded professional critic might value some of the aesthetic experience he has of even excellent artworks for the living it provides him. A related view is that aesthetic experience consists in disinterested contemplation, but the same

counterexample of the critic applies there, since she may not be disinterested while having aesthetic experience.

This chapter will then concentrate on the objective and subjective accounts, defending the latter against the former. Both come in narrower and broader varieties. All objective accounts must be somewhat narrow, since in specifying certain content as essential to aesthetic experience, they must exclude other kinds of content. If aesthetic experience can have any content whatsoever, that will not distinguish it. The narrowest version of the objective view characterizes aesthetic experience as attending to formal or structural properties of objects (narrowest if we think of formal properties in the ordinary sense as synonymous with structural relations). Other versions add expressive and other aesthetic properties (e.g. stirring, bouncy, dreary, dull) to the content. Even the latter objective views, however, are disjunctive, taking attention to any of these sorts of properties to be sufficient for aesthetic experience. Thus, showing that some such attention is not sufficient will refute the view.

The broadest objective view adds experience of meanings to the disjunction.² Once more how narrow even this broadest objective view is depends on how broadly aesthetic properties are defined. If they are defined as any properties relevant to the evaluation of artworks, the view will once more become overly broad from the point

of view of objective content theorists. They therefore tend to indicate aesthetic properties only by example. What they insist on instead is the separation out of some properties relevant to the evaluation of artworks, or contributing to artistic value, but not aesthetic value or experience. Thus reflecting on substantive themes or theses in literary works or gaining moral or psychological insight while attending to those or other artworks may be part of these works' value and our appreciation of them, but not part of our aesthetic experience of them according to these views.

On the subjective side, the narrowest account singles out one affect as the essential part of aesthetic experience. Jesse Prinz, for example, has characterized aesthetic appreciation as a feeling akin to awe.³ He separates aesthetic experience into initial response and appraisal; and while other emotions may be involved in the initial phase, the feeling of awe constitutes the appreciative experience of aesthetically good or great objects. In criticism of this view, I would point out that appraisal typically runs throughout our aesthetic experience of artworks, and that even positive appraisal can occur without being expressed in any single emotion such as awe. One might feel awe at certain toweringly powerful or sublime works, but one's aesthetic experiences are not limited to so few paradigms. Emotional engagement is certainly one aspect of our experience of artworks, but there is no single emotion always present in aesthetic experience.

I will defend instead the broad subjective account of aesthetic experience that has its closest roots in John Dewey and Monroe Beardsley.⁴ According to this account, such experience involves the active and simultaneous engagement of all our mental faculties: perception, imagination, emotion, and cognition. Such full absorption in or engagement with a work of art, which may then seem an alternative world to the viewer, is the mark of aesthetic experience. In regard to cognition in particular, the objects of which are excluded in narrower accounts, in my view aesthetic experience as it occurs in continuous interaction with an artwork can include grasp of thematic content and theses, as well as moral and other insight into the nature of art and the world.

Paradigm Cases

On what grounds should we prefer this broad account over narrower, and specifically formalistic, views? First, although I do not take this to be at all decisive, since experience itself is subjective, an account in terms of its subjective nature, phenomenology, or internal mental features will be expected to shed more light on its intrinsic nature. In picking out the experience we are seeking to describe, it will nevertheless be necessary first to have some idea as to what it is an experience of. I am not speaking narrowly of content here, but more broadly of the usual objects that give rise to aesthetic experiences. Here we already encounter a problem, since 'aesthetic experience' is not a widely used term in ordinary discourse, but mostly a technical term used by philosophers and psychologists. And technical terms can ordinarily be defined as their users decide. Obviously philosophers divide on their use of this term.

We need not settle for ambiguity or simply disparate uses, however. The term is not entirely foreign to those outside these disciplines. When I took informal surveys of my students and acquaintances as to what they considered the paradigm occasions for aesthetic experience, roughly half referred to experiences of very good artworks, while the other half spoke of natural beauty, such as sunsets, flowers, or mountains and lakes. The problem here is that the experience of a sunset bears very little in common with the experience of reading of a great novel, listening to a great symphony, or even viewing a great painting with understanding and full appreciation. By contrast, I claim that the latter three experiences do have something essential in common, namely the full engagement of all our mental capacities.

The narrowest objective or formalist account might seem to have an advantage in being able to count both appreciation of great artworks and sunsets as equally aesthetic experiences.⁵ It is able to do so only if we count the colors of a sunset as formal properties, and it seems a stretch to me to do so if formal properties are structural relations. The narrowest view can of course become somewhat less narrow by simply adding attention to color as an aesthetic experience. But then it becomes even clearer that such an account will not distinguish aesthetic experience from many

other kinds. Noticing that the shape of my TV or desk is rectangular (formal property) or that my shirt is blue does not strike me as an aesthetic experience, although these are clearly attentions to form and color.

Why then, it might be objected, do ordinary speakers refer to experiences of sunsets as well as artworks as aesthetic experiences, even if the former use is rarer? I believe these current uses are distinct, although they have a common source in earlier use of the term by aestheticians. That earlier use thought of aesthetic experience as the experience of beauty, common to good art and natural beauty. It is now long out of date in regard to art, as we have aesthetic experiences of artworks that do not aim at formal beauty and would not naturally be characterized as beautiful, as opposed, for example, as powerful, insightful, influential, etc. (none of which applies to sunsets). My survey supported this interpretation, as those who cited nature as their paradigm all mentioned beauty as the reason they referred to their experience as aesthetic, while none who cited artworks did so. Once we eliminate beauty as the formal property common to both sunsets and all great artworks, there seems to be no property common to both that distinguishes experiences of both from other experiences. Of course, both sunsets and artworks have form, but then so do virtually all other objects.

A second claimed advantage for the narrower accounts is that they can include experience of bad artworks as aesthetic experience, while the broad subjective account cannot.⁶ Inferior artworks still have formal, expressive, and other aesthetic properties, although they do not engage us on all levels as do good artworks. It is first of all significant here, however, that while we speak of bad as well as good art, we do not normally speak of bad aesthetic experiences. We aim to have aesthetic experiences and value them. 'Aesthetic experience' is therefore partly an evaluative term. It is then certainly not obvious that we have aesthetic experiences of bad or indifferent artworks, where such experiences would themselves be bad or indifferent. The claimed advantage of the narrower accounts is not an advantage. While we do speak of aesthetic experiences of sunsets as well as artworks, and therefore the broader account must acknowledge distinct uses when the narrower claims univocality, we might say

sarcastically, but not sincerely, "That was a real aesthetic experience," having just encountered a bad attempt at art.

My aim then is to characterize the experience of good or paradigmatic artworks as it occurs, as that aim reflects the primary use of the concept of aesthetic experience. Think of viewing the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, hearing the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or reading the final chapter of *Moby Dick*. We avidly seek out experience of such works and value that experience highly. It is not simply attention to formal structure in itself or even expressive properties that makes such experience so valuable, but the satisfying feel of exercising our full capacities, meeting the very gratifying challenge that such works present to our imaginations, emotions, and perceptual and cognitive faculties all at once. If the experiences of all these different genres of fine art have anything in common, in virtue of which we call it all aesthetic experience (and call all these genres fine art), it must be that which fits this broad account. Perception of both sensuous qualities and structure, informed by cognition, enlarged by imagination, and prompting emotional identification and response, is the intense experience we seek in fine art. Attention to form alone once more distinguishes aesthetic experience from few other kinds.

The Broad Account: Advantages and Objections

We seek out such experience, but we cannot have it at will. We want to share these fullest and most intense and satisfying experiences with others. We can advise them how to get themselves into positions to have such fulfilling encounters, but we cannot guarantee that they will succeed by so directing them. Artworks aim to produce such experience, to so fully engage us. We evaluate works on the basis of whether they succeed.

Many standard questions in aesthetics are answered by this account but not by narrower ones. Why do we condemn melodrama and sentimentality? Because they too easily stimulate emotion while failing to engage cognition. Didacticism is the opposite kind of aesthetic vice, again consisting in one-sidedness rather than simultaneous engagement. Why do we praise subtlety and condemn

heavy-handedness? Again for the challenge that the former but not the latter presents to all faculties to be actively engaged. Even beautiful form alone can leave us cold and seem shallow. When are moral defects or objectionable moral attitudes expressed in a work also aesthetic defects? When they turn us off from further engagement with the work or so dominate our experience of it as to block further aesthetic, i.e. fully engaged, experience. Why can we not evaluate artworks on the basis of testimony alone? Because whether they provide us with such rich experience depends on our personal knowledge, capacities, and tastes.

People differ in their aesthetic judgments or evaluations of works at every level of sophistication, and these judgments arise directly out of aesthetic experience or are part of it. If such experience were just attention to form, there would be no such disagreement in aesthetic judgment. Judgments differ because aesthetic experiences (or lack of them) differ: what fully engages one person will not do so for another. If we praise artworks for the aesthetic experiences they provide us, it must be experience as I have so far characterized it. Good art gives us experience to reflect on and think about, and this is not simply further reflection on its form.

Before characterizing such experience further, I can address some questions or objections that might arise at this point. I have suggested, again following Dewey, Beardsley, and others, that the mark of fine art is its production of aesthetic experience. This might raise the question again why bad art that does not produce such experience is still art. The simple answer that presents itself appeals to the shared aim at which the good but not the bad art succeeds. That might not be the complete answer, since bad art bears many other relations to paradigmatic art that might make common classification natural, such as fitting into the same historical narratives. I am not trying to exhaustively define art here, but only to claim that paradigmatic art produces the kind of aesthetic experience I have so far described, that we evaluate it on that ground, that this kind of experience is the most common referent of the term, and that such experience of artworks is distinguished from other kinds of experience.

The latter claim can be questioned too. Don't we fully exercise our capacities in other endeavors, for example work or sport? Not typically

simultaneously in the case of work. When writing a paper, I am fully cognitively engaged, but not ordinarily to the same degree perceptually, emotionally or imaginatively. When involved in a close tennis match, by contrast, I must play close perceptual attention, imaginatively envisage my opponent's strategy and shots, think hard about my strategy, and try to control my emotions, which will certainly be involved. But there is still a difference along these lines. I suggested above that our full mental engagement with an artwork, combined with lack of activity in the real physical world during that time, makes that work seem to us to be an alternative world, an avenue of escape from our ordinary concerns. I think this was in part what underlay the emphasis on disinterest from Kant's description of aesthetic experience on through subsequent aesthetic theory. The tennis match, by contrast, fully takes place in the physical world, involves physical even more than mental effort, and is one of my ordinary endeavors in that world.

Form, Concept, and Theme

In further characterizing aesthetic experience, my first claim is that the operations of our different faculties, including cognition in particular, are separable only analytically after the fact, and not in the experience as it occurs. A comparison to a musical tone is useful here. A tone can be analyzed as consisting in volume, pitch, timbre, and duration, but one cannot hear one of these without hearing all. The experience is always of all those elements, which are indissolubly conjoined parts of it. Similarly, attention to form, for example, in complex artworks typically involves all the above-mentioned faculties. Grasp of the structure of musical movements involves the perceptual application of sophisticated cognitive concepts, as well as affective response to dissonance and resolution. Perceptually grasping the aesthetic properties of a painting involves knowledge (cognition or application of concepts) of the medium, genre, style and its history. Grasping the formal structure of a novel often requires seeing how the characters and their relations change, and how these changes are presented sequentially in the narrative. But seeing changes in these relations often requires imaginative empathetic

identifications with the characters, i.e. emotional involvement.

To illustrate with a canonical work, in *Pride and Prejudice* the formal structure consists partly in the moral development of the main characters from early antagonism to perfect harmony, contrasting with the minor characters who remain static in their moral immaturity. The theme of moral development thus constitutes both content and formal structure at the same time. This is typical of literary themes. They not only express underlying content, what the novels are really about, but formally tie together otherwise diverse happenings in the narratives. We grasp content through form and vice versa.

To take a more contemporary but still canonical example, John Irving's *The Cider House Rules* is a classic linear narrative that nevertheless violates a central rule of such literary structure in that key developments are missing from the direct narrative, indicated only obliquely, expressing at the same time the novel's complex ambivalence toward rules in general.⁷ This union of form and thematic content on the objective or textual side is comprehended subjectively through thought, imagination, and feeling. One can say the same of musical themes and their transformations and developments, again necessarily grasped perceptually, cognitively, and affectively all at once.

Representational artworks embody meanings in their forms, and the appreciation of their aesthetic properties generally in aesthetic experience depends on the cognitive application of appropriate concepts or categories.⁸ Appreciation of color, for example, depends on grasping what it is the color of. Flesh tones may be beautiful on flesh painted by Titian or Renoir, but not on pants or socks. Sunsets, unlike paintings, do not embody meanings (except for personal associations), but even in their case appreciation of the beautiful color depends on cognitive application of the appropriate concept: again the color would not make for beautiful pants. Green but not brown is beautiful in grass; the opposite is generally true once more in pants. The perceptual experience of the sunset or grass is unlike the knowledgeable experience of the painting, however, because the engagement of the cognitive faculty is nevertheless minimal in the former and substantial in the latter.

From Theme to Thesis

I have argued that aesthetic experience involves the inseparable, mutually reinforcing, simultaneous operation of the mental faculties, including cognition, and that this is indeed the mark of aesthetic experience that distinguishes it from other kinds. It will now be objected that proponents of the narrower view need not deny this role of cognition! Specifically, they need not deny that cognition is involved in the attention to and apprehension of form, or, on the objective side, that themes in representational works play both formal and contentful roles at once. What are excluded in the narrower accounts are the more typical objects of cognition: theses about art or the world, or moral, political, psychological, or philosophical insight. These are seen to be separable or beneficial effects of aesthetic experience, part of artistic but not aesthetic value or experience. Cognition may be required to perceptually appreciate form, but the acquisition of knowledge or insight of any kind is not included in aesthetic experience or in the appreciation of the aesthetic value of artworks according to the narrower accounts.

But we need only expand on points made earlier in order to see that this separation will not work either, at least again as a description of aesthetic experience as it occurs. I said, following Arthur Danto,⁹ that artworks embody content or meaning in their forms. They are about something, i.e. have themes or thematic content, and that content is reflected in and partly expressed through their forms, both of which, form and content, are therefore experienced simultaneously. Moral development, I have pointed out, is a theme of *Pride and Prejudice*. But in grasping that theme we at the same time see Jane Austen's views as to the nature and causes of moral development, for example that it proceeds from an initial narrow egocentric perspective to a broader perspective that includes empathetic identification with others' different points of view, that this process is initiated by interactions, often cooperative as well as competitive interactions, with others from different backgrounds and with different as well as shared interests, and so on. In seeing how the development of characters in the novel exemplify these implicit theses of Jane Austen, we gain insights into the nature of moral development in

real people. These insights rely on two implicit recognitions: that our vicarious experience of the characters' development meshes with our own prior experience that exemplified these features without focusing on them at the time, and that Jane Austen is an astute observer of human psychology in action.

The main point here in regard to our experience of reading the novel is that we cannot appreciate the theme of moral development without simultaneously understanding the substantive theses related to or expressed in that theme. Grasping the theme is part of attending to the form of the novel; grasping the theme is at the same time understanding its substantive content or theses; and understanding the theses in this case (and whenever the author is inferred to be reliable) involves accepting them and therefore gaining insight or knowledge of the real as well as the fictional world. All these are again aspects of the intelligent reading experience as it occurs. Once more understanding substantive theses or gaining moral or psychological insight into the real world is an integral part of the experience of reading the novel, which, as the experience of a great artwork, is properly deemed aesthetic experience. To say that artworks embody meanings is to say that we gain insight in aesthetic experience through our perceptions and emotional involvements. At the least we gain insight as to what the works are about.

Examples from good literary narratives can of course be multiplied indefinitely. Returning to our other previous example, one formal thematic pattern in *The Cider House Rules* consists in the contrasting attitudes of all the characters toward rules and the fates that befall them as a result of those attitudes. The two rule skeptics, Dr. Larch and Ray Kendall, whose creativity refuses to be restrained by any rules, meet untimely deaths by ignoring rules in the areas of their expertise regarding the handling of hazardous substances. Melanie, who lives by only a few simple rules gleaned from hard experience, suffers the same fate for the same reason. Mr. Rose, who seeks to impose and follow only his own rules, is killed by the daughter with whom he violated the universal rule against incest. On the other side, there are unjustified rules, such as the law against abortion, causing great harm, and rules futilely imposed on those who are unwilling or unable to accept them, such as the cider house rules themselves. And the most ridiculous character

is the rule fetishist Mrs. Goodhall, who almost wreaks havoc by her strict adherence to needless and foolish rules. Only the Dickensian hero Homer Wells, through a long and painful process of adaptation and self-discovery, comes to recognize which rules to obey, which to violate, and when.

From our reading experience of the novel, vicariously living through the consequences of these characters' attitudes and actions, we gain insight into just how complex and nuanced our attitudes toward moral and social rules need to be. We appreciate the formal structure described above for what the author says through it. We don't attend to the form separately at all unless we are formalist critics, but see through the form to the content. Hence, according to the narrow formalist account, we don't have aesthetic experience of this novel. Yet reading the novel with understanding of its themes and theses is a paradigm of literary aesthetic experience.

The insights regarding moral development and rules are exactly the sort of thing that the narrower accounts want to exclude from aesthetic experience, even though such insight typically occurs in the course of the reading experience, and not later after we put the books down and return to our ordinary lives. Such acquisition of knowledge, especially about human social relations, occurs frequently within reading experiences, and often they are essential to reading with understanding. Can we read the famous passages in *Huckleberry Finn*, where Huck refuses to turn in his friend Jim as a runaway slave and condemns morality for requiring that he do so, without feeling the irony and gaining the insight that in Huck's case, as in the case of many others, true morality is, as Hume claimed, a matter of the heart and not of the mind? Can we read *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night* without gaining insight in the course of the reading experience into the nature of autism?

Sometimes, as notoriously in the case of George Eliot, an author will interrupt the narrative in order to provide such psychological insights directly. When they are factually inaccurate (hence not genuine insights) or overly didactic, they can be aesthetic defects in turning us off from further engagement with the work. But they can also be an integral part of our cognitive engagement in reading. We value the experience of reading novels in part for the insights into how others' minds work that such experience provides.

Characters in novels are not simply place holders in abstract formal structures, but models of the human condition we share as we vicariously live through their extended experiences. The reading experience is this vicarious experience and includes the insights we gain from it, as we do from real life experience. That we are personally involved in the vicarious experience of reading adds to the cognitive value and retention of the knowledge we gain,¹⁰ and acquiring such knowledge constitutes a major part of our cognitive engagement with the novels, part of the total engagement that is our aesthetic experience. Why would we want to exclude from such experience a large part of what makes it the experience it is?

Nonliterary Arts

I have been focusing on the experience of reading fictional literature, and it is perhaps most obvious there that gaining insight and knowledge is an integral part of the aesthetic experience, certainly if that refers to the entire experience of reading as it occurs. But some might deny that aesthetic experience typically occurs at all in reading literature, which they would describe as a nonaesthetic art form, as opposed to painting and music. I would reply that literature is always grouped with the fine arts and reiterate that one thing all the arts have in common is the sort of experience that the paradigms provide, i.e. aesthetic experience, as nontechnical use of the concept indicates.

A perhaps less contentious reply is that insight as a part of aesthetic experience is not limited to reading literature, or even to the representational arts. Arthur Danto, whom I have been citing as the proponent of the idea that all artworks embody meanings, focused on modern painting, including abstract paintings. A minimal insight from any artwork viewed with understanding is insight into what the artist or work is doing, what its aim or point is and how it achieves or fails to achieve that aim. Attention to form in an abstract or pure musical piece provides insight into how the music progresses through variations and developments to a pleasing closure. Such insight in turn informs our experience as we listen, creating an aura of imaginative expectation.

To cite one of Danto's most famous interpretations of a modern work, he sees Andy Warhol's

Brillo Box as raising deep philosophical questions about the relations between ordinary objects and artworks. According to Danto, the work itself called for a new definition of art as consisting in objects to be interpreted in terms of the historical development of art theory. The relevant point here is that we certainly experience *Brillo Box* differently from the way we see an ordinary brillo box when we are guided by Danto's interpretation. And the difference lies not in our attention to its cubical form, which would be the same in both cases and not aesthetic at all. The difference lies mainly in our cognitive engagement with the work of art and its place in art history, including the philosophical insight gained, which, combined with the perceptual origin of this engagement, constitutes an aesthetic experience (if not an all-engaging or maximally fulfilling one). Of course we need not confine ourselves to or even accept Danto's interpretation in order to have an aesthetic experience of the artwork (but not of the almost perceptually indistinguishable commercial object). We can view the work, for example, as a comment on modern industrial production and the commercial artistic choices it constrains. What matters is the cognitive engagement, the interpretive play that perception of the work engenders, so as to produce aesthetic experience.

Concluding Remarks

Art and literary criticism guides us toward aesthetic experiences by pointing to features of works that engage us perceptually, emotionally, cognitively, and imaginatively. But the history of criticism has wavered between one-sided emphases that mirror the narrow views of aesthetic experience. Plato thought that the function of art should be entirely cognitive, and he condemned artists and dramatists for appealing primarily to emotions instead of reflective thought. The much later Romantic age, typified by Tolstoy and Collingwood, viewed art as the expression or communication of emotion. The modern era, represented initially by Clive Bell, was the age of formalist criticism. None of these critical styles has any more claim to lasting dominance than the others. Of late, perhaps in reaction to narrow formalism, there has been a return to emphasis on cognition and imagination, for example in the

writings of the aforementioned Arthur Danto and Kendall Walton.¹¹ Isn't it plausible that all these critical styles point us to different aesthetically relevant aspects of works, that each is one-sided in the same way that narrow accounts of aesthetic experience are, and that both criticism and the aesthetic experience that it reflects and at which it aims legitimately encompass all these aspects?

When narrow accounts of aesthetic experience are not simply one-sided, they are, as noted earlier, disjunctive, seeing attention to form, or emotional expression, or ... as sufficient for aesthetic experience. But, as pointed out, none is sufficient in itself. Attention to the shape of an object or to the expression of outrage in a letter to a corporate CEO does not constitute an aesthetic experience. Such accounts are disjunctive in another way too. They recognize that the cognitive aspects of the experience of artworks that they wish to exclude from aesthetic experience are nevertheless relevant to evaluations of those works. And so they must add a category of artistic value separate from aesthetic value as a depository for the value of our cognitive engagement with the works. An inconvenient problem for this move is that we do not speak of artistic experience in the way that we speak of aesthetic experience of artworks. If the latter is the concept we apply in describing our experience of fine artworks, it once more must include all the evaluatively relevant aspects of that experience. And this again includes the ways that artworks engage our perceptual, imaginative, emotional, and cognitive faculties.

Notes

- 1 Noel Carroll calls them the content and affect accounts. The latter is too narrow a concept to capture the view I will defend here. See Noel Carroll, 'Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 70 (2012): 165–177.
- 2 The intermediate view is that of Noel Carroll, the broader that of Robert Stecker. See notes 1 and 5.
- 3 Jesse Prinz, 'Emotion and Aesthetic Value,' in E. Shellekens and P. Goldie, eds., *The Aesthetic Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 4 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958); Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981).
- 5 Robert Stecker claimed this as an advantage in a paper delivered at a conference at the College of William and Mary, October, 2015.
- 6 This advantage is claimed by Noel Carroll, 'Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience,' *Metaphilosophy*, forthcoming.
- 7 The reader can find full discussions of these novels along these lines in Alan Goldman, *Philosophy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- 8 As first argued by Kendall Walton, 'Categories of Art,' *The Philosophical Review*, 79 (1970): 334–367.
- 9 Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).
- 10 Compare Stacey Friend, 'Narrating the Truth (More or Less),' in M. Kieran and D.M. Lopes, eds., *Knowing Art* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).
- 11 See also the recent collections *The Aesthetic Mind*, op. cit., and *Knowing Art*, op. cit.

Artistic Value

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We all think that the quality of a work of art, or an artist, is proved if it seizes and deeply affects us. But *our own quality* of judgement and feeling would first have to be proved: which is not the case.

Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, I, §161

Artistic and Non-Artistic Values

The central question in the philosophy of art is, What is the value of art? Philosophical reflection on art would be idle unless art were valuable to us, and the significance of any question that arises in philosophical reflection on art derives directly or ultimately from the light that its answer throws upon the value of art. But if this is so, What is the value of art? If we construe art as the totality of (actual or possible) works of art, the value of art is the sum of the individual values of these various works of art. What, then, is the value of a work of art?

However, it would be premature to attempt to answer this question as it stands, because its meaning is indeterminate. For whatever can be evaluated, can be evaluated from different points of view, and corresponding to the point of view from which it is assessed, the value

attributed to it will be of a different kind. So a work of art can have many different kinds of value – a cognitive value, a social value, an educational value, a historical value, a sentimental value, a religious value, an economic value, a therapeutic value; it can possess as many kinds of value as there are points of view from which it can be evaluated. Now an artist is someone who practises an activity as an art. What an artist tries to do is to create a product with a distinctive kind of value. She attempts to make something that is valuable *as art*, or, more specifically, *as art of such-and-such a kind*. I shall call this value ‘artistic value’ or ‘the value of a work of art *as a work of art*’. So artistic value is just the value referred to in such judgements as these: James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a better novel than D. H. Lawrence’s *Kangaroo*, Grünewald’s *Christ on the Cross with the Virgin, St John and Mary Magdalen* is a finer painting than Salvador Dali’s *Christ of St John of the Cross*, and Beethoven’s last piano sonata (Op. III) is finer than his first (Op. 2, No. I) – if not finer as a sonata, certainly finer music. Thus ‘artistic value’ signifies a value that has degrees: some works of art have more of it than others, some lack it entirely, and some have it to the same degree. The prime task of a theory of value in art is to elucidate the distinctive value of art – the value of a work of art as a work of art.

It will be as well to deal at once with an objection that is likely to be brought against this idea of the value of a work of art as a work of art.

Malcolm Budd, “Artistic Value” from *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry and Music*. London: Penguin Books, 1995, pp. 1–16. Reproduced with permission of Penguin Random House, Inc.

The objection is aimed at the implication that the value is unitary, and it exists in two related forms. The first maintains that it is necessary to give an irreducibly disjunctive account of value *across* the arts, because for each art form – music, painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, dance – there is a distinct kind of value: the value of a work of art of a particular art form *as* of that form is different for each art form. According to this version of the objection, there is the value of music as music, the value of painting as painting, the value of sculpture as sculpture, and so on, and there is no overarching value that unifies this set of values, which form a heterogeneous collection. The second version presses the point further by claiming that it is necessary to give an irreducibly disjunctive account of value *within* each art, since each art form admits works of art of different natures and aims and these various kinds of work have values specific to them. So within the art of music, there is the value of a song as a song, the value of a symphony as a symphony, and so on for the other musical genres; and within each of the other arts, there is a distinct kind of value for each artistic genre that falls within that art.

Now for either of these versions of the objection to assume a definite form, it would be necessary for it to indicate criteria for the identity and difference of the kinds of art to which it assigns distinct kinds of value; and if the second version is to stop short of assigning distinct kinds of value to each particular work of art, the individuating criteria it specifies must, without being arbitrary, allow different works to possess the same kind of value. But there is no need to pursue the issue, for neither form of the objection is persuasive, and each is open to the same response. It is true that the features of a work of art that make it good as music are different from those that make a work good as literature, that what makes a painting a fine landscape is not what is responsible for the value of a painting of the Annunciation (its value *as* such a painting), and that there are different varieties of artistic value. But this shows only that artistic value can be realized in many different ways, not that it lacks an essence. So much for this blunt rejection of the idea of a work's artistic value.

Three linked issues immediately arise about artistic value: its individuation, its status and its

epistemology. First, it is necessary to identify artistic value by answering the question, What is the value of a work of art *as* a work of art? Second, the status of the value must be elucidated. Is artistic value relative or absolute, subjective or intersubjective, a real property of works of art or a projection on to them of the responses they arouse in us? And a constraint on satisfactory solutions of the first two issues is that they should deliver the correct solution of the third, the epistemological issue. What is the fundamental procedure for finding out what the artistic value of a work of art is? Is it necessary to be acquainted with the work, and, if so, what explains the necessity?

It will quickly become clear that in answering the initial question I do not attempt, first to present a definition of a work of art or a philosophical theory of art or a statement of its supposed essence, then to derive from the definition a conception of artistic value, the value of a work of art *as such*, that is, as satisfying the definition. Given what has happened to the concept of art, especially in this century, it would be fruitless to proceed in this way: an account of artistic value cannot be extracted from the present concept of art. Instead, I specify a distinctive value – a value that works of art can possess, and which is possessed to a high degree by all great works of art; I then count an evaluation of a work of art as an evaluation of it *as art* in so far as the work is being evaluated with respect to the distinctive value I have specified. My answer to the question will demonstrate the unity of the concept of artistic value, or, more accurately, will give unity to it.

Intrinsic and Instrumental Values

A perspicuous elucidation of the concept of artistic value is possible in terms of what I shall call 'the experience a work of art offers'. Although what is involved in understanding a work of art varies from art to art and also within each art, it is definitive of a work of art that it can be understood; and I mean by 'the experience a work of art offers' an experience of the work in which it is understood. So the experience a work offers is an experience of interacting with it in whatever way it demands if it is to be understood – reading it,

looking at it, listening to it, performing it or in some other way appreciating it. For you to experience a work with (full) understanding your experience must be imbued with an awareness of (all) the aesthetically relevant properties of the work – the properties that ground the attribution of artistic value and that constitute the particular forms of value the work exemplifies. The experience a work of art offers is an experience *of* the work itself: it does not have a nature specifiable independently of the nature of the work. It is also not any person's actual experience, but a type, one that can be multiply instantiated, and more or less closely approximated to. It can be such that the order of its parts is fully determined by the nature of the work (as with music), or not so (as with painting and architecture).

My claim is that the value of a work of art as a work of art is intrinsic to the work in the sense that it is (determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers (so that if it offers more than one experience, it has more than one artistic value or an artistic value composed of these different artistic values). It should be remembered that the experience a work of art offers is an experience *of the work itself*, and the valuable qualities of a work are qualities *of the work*, not of the experience it offers. It is the nature of the work that endows the work with whatever artistic value it possesses; this nature is what is experienced in undergoing the experience the work offers; and the work's artistic value is the intrinsic value of this experience. So a work of art is valuable as art if it is such that the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable; and it is valuable to the degree that this experience is intrinsically valuable.

By the intrinsic value of an item I do not mean a value that depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the item – a value that depends solely on its internal properties (its qualities and inner relations) – as contrasted with an extrinsic value – a value that depends, wholly or in part, on its external properties (its relations to other things). My conception of intrinsic value opposes it, not to extrinsic value, but to instrumental value, and I do not assume that something's intrinsic value is dependent solely on its intrinsic nature. By the instrumental value of a work of art I mean the value, from whatever point of view, of the actual effects of the experience of the work on people or

the effects that would be produced if people were to experience the work. (I do not mean the *suitability* of the work, in virtue of its nature, to produce valuable or harmful effects on certain kinds of people as a result of their experience of the work.) My claim therefore implies that the instrumental value of a work of art, its beneficial or harmful, short- or long-term effects or influence, either on a given person or people in general – where the effects are consequences of the experience and not elements or aspects of the experience itself – is not the value of the work of art *as* a work of art.

If a work possesses artistic value, this does not consist in the work's actually accomplishing some valuable end in the case of one, some or many of us, or in the fact that it would, if experienced with understanding, accomplish such an end. This is easy to see, for what is achieved by experiencing a work of art depends not only on the experience that its appreciation yields but also on the character, attitude and will of any person who experiences it. There is only a personal answer to the question whether the appreciation of a work of art kindles or dampens a desire to enhance the lives of other people, whether it is a stimulus to, or a safety-valve which prevents, immoral action, or whether it infects with, or inoculates against, a mood of despair, for example. The influence of a work of art is not like the operation of certain drugs which, independently of the subject's attitude, character and will, produce their distinctive effects regardless.

It counts in favour of the identification I propose that there is a conspicuous mismatch between our opinions about the artistic value of a work and our opinions about the instrumental value of the experience it offers. The instrumental value of the experience of a work of art is in fact many-headed and ill-defined, and it can be considered at an individual or a more general level. But at whatever level it is considered, there is unlikely to be a correspondence between the strength and nature of your opinion about the artistic value of a work and the strength and nature of your opinion about the instrumental value of its experience. The fact is that most of us, perhaps all of us, know very little about what the beneficial or harmful effects of the experience of a particular work of art, or particular kinds of work, on particular people or people in general,

are or would be. Think of the difficulty of trying to establish the effects of the appreciation of a particular work of art, such as Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, or Bruckner's Seventh Symphony.

But we do have a general knowledge of the kinds of relation that can hold between people's experience of a work of art and their later psychological condition and behaviour. We know that the gratification some people derive from works of art – even the finest works of art – leads them only to seek out the experience of more fine works of art; along other paths, their experience of art is sterile. Such people have an exceptional capacity to isolate or compartmentalize their appreciation of art. At bottom, they are unconcerned that the works of art they admire should affect their lives in any way that will be beneficial to themselves or others. Their approach to art is unreflectively or self-consciously 'aesthetic' or sentimental; the denial of this possibility is itself a form of sentimentalism.

The question whether an experience is worth undergoing for its own sake is not the same as the question whether the experience is in other ways beneficial to those who find the experience enjoyable, exciting or in some other way rewarding, even if in many cases the two questions may receive the same answer; and the evaluation of a work of art as a work of art must be based on an assessment of the intrinsic value, not the instrumental value, of the experience the work offers. It is vital to see that we can evaluate – we usually must evaluate – the character of the experience a work offers independently of any opinion about whether the experience will in fact have desirable or undesirable effects on the mind, character and behaviour of an individual or a group of people. The effects of the experience of a work of art on an individual (its individual instrumental value) or on people in general (its overall instrumental value) are certainly of great importance; but it is the character of the experience the work offers, in conjunction with the nature of those who undergo it, that determines what these effects are likely to be; and it is not these effects themselves, but the character of the experience, that determines the artistic value of the work.

There are two further considerations that should facilitate acceptance of my claim about artistic value. The first is that many of what are

thought of as benefits of the experience of art are intrinsic to the experience, not merely products of it. The experience a work of art offers can involve the invigoration of one's consciousness, or a refined awareness of human psychology or political or social structures, or moral insight, or an imaginative identification with a sympathetic form of life or point of view that is not one's own; it can be beneficial in these and countless other ways. But since such benefits are aspects, not consequences, of the experience the work offers, the irrelevance of the actual effects of the experience to the work's artistic value does not imply the irrelevance of these kinds of benefits. On the contrary, such benefits contribute to making the experience intrinsically valuable and partly constitute the ways in which it is so.

The second consideration is that an experience can be *such as* to be conducive to a beneficial effect on people – people who are concerned to profit from the work that affords the experience. This is what Yvor Winters had in mind when thinking of poetry as a moral discipline:

Poetry, if pursued either by the poet or by the reader, in the manner which I have suggested, should offer a means of enriching one's awareness of human experience and so of rendering greater the possibility of intelligence in the course of future action; and it should offer likewise a means of inducing certain more or less constant habits of feeling, which should render greater the possibility of one's acting, in a future situation, in accordance with the findings of one's improved intelligence. It should, in other words, increase the intelligence and strengthen the moral temper; these effects should naturally be carried over into action, if, through constant discipline, they are made permanent acquisitions.

Although the appreciation of poetry does not automatically result in improvements of the kind Winters indicates, the nature of fine poetry is such as to help to induce them in those who apply themselves in the manner he advocates.

Aestheticism, Artist and Spectator

It would be a misunderstanding of my account of artistic value to object to the implied downgrading of the instrumental value of the experience of

a work of art. For my identification of the artistic value of a work of art with the intrinsic value of the experience it offers carries no such implication. The identification of artistic value is not a matter of weighing one kind of value against another, but of discriminating the one from the other. I have made no claim about the difficult topic of the comparative ranking of different kinds of value. Measured by a certain yardstick (a moral yardstick, for example), the value of a work of art as a work of art will not be the most important kind of value that a work of art can possess. But the issue of the identification of artistic value is, What is artistic value?, not, What is the worth of artistic value? The answer I have given to the constitutive question identifies the value of a work as a work of art with the intrinsic, not the instrumental, value of the experience it offers, and this implies nothing about the importance of artistic value relative to other kinds of value. Accordingly, my identification of artistic value is not equivalent to and does not imply a downgrading of the instrumental value of art.

There are two further misunderstandings to which my account of artistic value is liable. The first misconstrues it as an unacceptable form of aestheticism. The charge of aestheticism is likely to arise if it is thought that the identification of a work's artistic value with the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers is tantamount to the doctrine of 'Art for Art's Sake'. But this doctrine is strikingly equivocal: many different views have sought shelter under its banner, and the force of the charge varies accordingly. Here it will be sufficient to dissociate my account from four dogmas and one ethical stance, none of which it implies.

The first dogma is the existence of a specifically aesthetic emotion, which it is the artistic function of art to arouse. But it is clear that this does not follow from my claim about artistic value; and the emotion it posits is only a myth. The second is the irrelevance of a work's subject-matter to its artistic value. According to this doctrine, it does not matter what a work represents, only how it represents it. But not only is this doctrine not implied by the conception of a work's artistic value as the intrinsic value of the experience it offers, it is shown to be false in the examination of pictorial value I undertake in the second part of the book. The third dogma is the requirement that the spectator's response to a work of art should be

disconnected from her attitude to the moral or other evaluative point of view that the work expresses. But it is not necessary to accept the theory of a work of art as a *sui generis* world, to be experienced and valued independently of whether it accords or conflicts with one's own beliefs and values, and only in terms of whether it creates a coherent and satisfying world of its own – the theory that was held up by adherents of the doctrine of 'Art for Art's Sake' against the demands for truth and morality in art – in order to restrict artistic value to the nature of the experience in which the work of art is understood, so as to exclude any further separable effect. It is not necessary to embrace the theory of a work of art as an autonomous world in order to maintain the thesis that the value of a work of art as a work of art is the intrinsic value of the experience it offers. The final dogma is the complete lack of determination of a work's artistic value by any values that are not specifically artistic or aesthetic values. But the claim that a work's artistic value is determined by the intrinsic, not the instrumental, value of the experience it offers does not imply that its artistic value is independent of any values it may possess that are not art-specific or specifically aesthetic. Values that are not specific to art or the aesthetic are not thereby essentially unrelated to artistic value. The truth is that artistic value does not exist in a watertight compartment impermeable by other values; on the contrary, other values can be determinants of artistic value, as when a novel's value is a function of its intelligence, wit, imagination, knowledge and understanding of human life.

The ethical stance that is not implied by my conception of artistic value assigns supreme importance to art in human life, claiming that life should be lived for art's sake, or that the highest form of life is devotion to art, or, rather differently, that, in Nietzsche's words, 'we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art – for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally justified'. As with the comparative ranking of different values of art, so with the place of art in human life, no conclusions flow from the identification of artistic value with the intrinsic value of the experience a work of art offers.

The second misunderstanding I wish to protect my claim against represents it as being a spectator-oriented aesthetics that denies the true significance of the artist. Am I not placing the

artistic value of a work in the experience of the spectator, neglecting both the value to the artist of the work she produces and the way in which the idea of the artist should occur in the spectator's appreciation of the artist's work? No. In the first place, it should be remembered that not only do 'artist' and 'spectator' refer to roles, rather than people, but that the role of the artist, properly understood, requires the artist, in the creation of her work, to adopt or bear in mind the role of the spectator. A so-called 'artist' who is unconcerned about the character of the experience her work offers is thereby unconcerned to endow her product with a distinctive kind of value – the one I have identified as the value of a work of art as a work of art. This consideration is reinforced by the fact that a work of art is intended to be understood *as* a work of art; the experience a work of art offers is one in which the work is understood; the meaning of a work of art – how it should be interpreted – is tied to the conception of the work under which the artist created it, the style in which it is executed, the works of art to which it alludes and the view of the world and life out of which it arose; and the appreciation of a work of art is the appreciation of the artistry of the artist, which requires an appreciation of the artistic achievement the work represents, so that experience of the work must be informed by an understanding of the aesthetically relevant facts about the work's history. Finally, it is a confusion to introduce the idea of the value to the artist herself of the work she produces and to complain that my account of artistic value neglects this. For a work never has a single value to the artist, and there are many values to the artist it might have that are irrelevant to its assessment as a valuable work of art. The objection would be sound only if a work has a value to the artist which is ignored in my account and which determines, wholly or in part, the value of the work as art. But this is not so. The fact is that the account of artistic value I have presented is neither spectator- nor artist-oriented, but assigns due weight to both roles.

Acquaintance

An elucidation of artistic value is correct only if it yields the right answer to the question, What is the fundamental procedure, the canonical

method, for finding out what the artistic value of a work is? Clearly, the basic way of determining the value of a work of art requires you to experience the work with understanding – to undergo the experience the work offers. Although, contrary to what has sometimes been maintained, you can form a judgement on the merits of a work you are not acquainted with, this involves trust in the judgement of someone who is acquainted with it, an attempt to imagine what it would be like to experience it, or an extrapolation from the works with which you are acquainted. Leaving these possibilities on one side, you can find out what the artistic value of a work is only by experiencing it in the relevant manner. This conclusion flows easily from the identification of artistic value with the intrinsic value of the experience a work offers. For what this identification requires you to find out is whether this experience is intrinsically valuable to undergo, and, if it is, to what degree and in what manner. The experience that a fine work of art offers must be such that it deserves to be found intrinsically rewarding. What could be a better way to find this out than to undergo the experience? As John Stuart Mill insisted, the only evidence for whether an experience is worth having for its own sake is the verdict of those who are familiar with the experience. Of course, the satisfaction of the requirement that the work is experienced with understanding is a matter of degree, and you can misunderstand a work you think you understand. But these facts do not imply that you are never justified in taking yourself to experience a work with understanding. If you are justified, you are then in the best possible position to judge the intrinsic value of the experience. For whether you find it interesting, amusing, exciting, poignant or in any other way intrinsically rewarding is in general a matter that your experience declares to you. Admittedly, you may not endorse your first-order response to a work of art, and even if you do, the fact that *you* find the work intrinsically rewarding in some way does not imply that the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable. But all that is required for the implication to hold is that when you experience the response indicated by the term expressing the variety of intrinsic value, your response should be appropriate or justified, perhaps justified above all other responses. If you find the work intrinsically rewarding and you are right to

do so, then the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable. So the identification of artistic value with the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers yields a simple explanation of why acquaintance must play the fundamental role that has always been assigned to it in the determination of artistic value, without disallowing value judgements that are not immediately based on acquaintance with the work.

Art and Communication

I now need to refine the idea of assessing the intrinsic value of the experience offered by a work of art. In undergoing such an experience either you find it in some way rewarding or you do not. Given that you endorse your response, only if you find it in some way rewarding do you have reason to consider the experience intrinsically valuable. But the reward given by the experience can be related to the experience in two different ways. On the one hand, it can be such that in principle it is possible to obtain that reward without undergoing the experience of the work. On the other hand, undergoing the experience of the work is partly constitutive of the reward. In a case of the first kind, it is not essential to the reward given by the experience that you should undergo the experience, just as it is not essential to the valued state of sleep that it should be induced in you in one way rather than another. If the experience is valuable to you only for this detachable reward, so that there is no conceptual constraint on the character of any experience that gives you exactly the same reward, you are not finding the work valuable *as a work of art*. You are valuing the work as you value a drug, for the effect it produces, the only difference from the artistic case being that there is a noticeable temporal gap between the effect caused by the drug and the ingestion of the drug. For you to find a work valuable as a work of art, what you find intrinsically rewarding in your experience of the work must not be something that could be present even if your experience lacked the character of the experience the work offers: your experience must not consist of two separable components, the intrinsically rewarding component being a mere effect of an intrinsically unrewarding component – the experience of the work itself.

This conclusion receives clarification and support from a consideration of the doctrine that art is essentially a form of communication. An extreme version of this thesis conceives of the act of communication supposedly integral to the creation and appreciation of art as the transference of the artist's experience in a particularly strong sense – the sense in which a football player might be transferred from one team to another. This renders the idea incoherent: it makes no more sense to think of transferring an experience from one person to another than it does to think of transferring a goal scored in one match to another match. To obtain a coherent form of the doctrine it is necessary to understand the concept of communication in its usual sense, as in the conveyance of information from one person to another. Suppose I have received a letter from a friend in which she communicates her thoughts about the value of art. Here we can distinguish the vehicle of communication from the 'message' communicated. On the one hand, there is the sheet of paper with ink marks inscribed on its surface which has travelled from my friend to me. This is the means by which whatever is communicated to me is communicated to me. On the other hand, there is what is communicated – my friend's thoughts. Now the vehicle is not identical with the message. There are many other ways in which the same message could have been communicated. If the message had been communicated by means of speech, semaphore or morse code, for example, a different vehicle would have been used to communicate the same message. Rather than the inscribed sheet of paper, the vehicle would have been a sequence of sounds or positions of flags held in the hands or short and long flashes of light, say. This distinction between vehicle and message can be drawn in all cases of communication, no matter whether the message – what is communicated – is a thought, an emotion, an attitude or an experience.

The relevance of this distinction to the doctrine that art is essentially a form of communication emerges at once if this doctrine is understood as a thesis about the value of art, to the effect that when we value a work as a work of art: (i) it communicates something to us; (ii) we value it only because it communicates this to us; and (iii) we value it to the degree that we value what it communicates. In other words, the value of a work of

art is the value of the thoughts, emotions or whatever else it communicates, so that a work of art that fails to communicate anything lacks artistic value, and the task of the artist is to create a vehicle adequate to convey a valuable message. But it is clear that this conception of the value of art misrepresents our attachment to works of art when we value them *as* works of art. For the distinction between vehicle and message intrinsic to the concept of communication means that for any message there are in principle many vehicles capable of communicating that message. So this conception of artistic value implies, first, that we must assign the same artistic value to anything else that communicates exactly the same message as the one communicated by a work we value, and, second, that from the point of view of our interest in art, for any work of art we must be indifferent between experiencing it or something else that communicates the same message (and so, according to this conception, possesses the same artistic value). Yet neither implication is correct. If our sole reason for valuing a work of art is that it communicates a particular message, so that the manner in which the message is com-

municated does not matter to us, our attachment to the work is wrongly described as our valuing it *as* a work of art. The moral is clear: the communication conception of artistic value misrepresents the importance of the experience of the work, crediting it only with an instrumental role in the production of what is valuable in the experience of art, rather than locating the reward in the experience itself. It is, of course, true that what a work of art communicates can be *integral* to its value as a work of art, for it may be integral to the experience the work offers. But it is the message *as communicated by the work*, the message *as realized in the experience of the work*, that determines the work's artistic value, not the message itself. If you value Munch's *The Scream* as a work of art, and you value it because it conveys a sense of intense fright, it is the picture – the picture perceived as expressive of intense fear – that impresses you, not merely an impression of fear caused by it. Our attachment to the works we value as art is an attachment to the very experiences they offer, not to something detachable from them. To appreciate the value of a work of art it is necessary to undergo the experience it offers.

Beauty Restored

Mary Mothersill

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11. Under the titles respectively of ‘criteria’ and ‘good-making characteristics’, principles of taste and laws of taste coexist in an uneasy symbiosis: if one were scotched the other could not long survive. The truth, as it seems to me, is that there are not and never will be any laws of taste. Since principles of taste are, by hypothesis, normative principles, it does not follow that there are no principles of taste. But once belief in principles of taste is deprived of the support provided by imagined laws, its force is weakened. It has nothing to sustain it except the unexamined modal argument that forces a choice between principles of taste and skepticism (or subjectivism).

Nothing that would count as a strict proof of my negative thesis could be immune to the charge of question-begging. What is needed is a hypothesis that has disconfirmation-conditions, and the one I shall defend is that nobody believes in laws of taste. Of course, to make my case persuasive, I must in the first place show how one might be led to acquiesce in what one did not believe and, second, explain why the mere *possibility* of laws of taste, of truths yet to be discovered, seems

attractive. Let me try, by expanding on the account offered earlier, to make the conception as plausible as possible by imposing some restrictions. In contrast with, say, the patellar reflex, aesthetic response is conditioned by such factors as the education, background, and sensibilities of the subject. This means that there will have to be two universal quantifiers, and though it doesn’t matter which comes first, let us begin by defining the population for which a law might hold, and let us assume that we have agreed on a non-circular specification of requirements for being a ‘qualified subject’. Let us further take it as given that an item can become a cause of pleasure to *S* only in the context of some appropriate activity: novels must be read, music listened to, and so forth. Let us, out of deference to convention, assume that the objects in question are works of art or works of art in a specified medium or genre. These, after all, are at the center of the controversy; the ‘good-making characteristics’ of cloud formations, seashells, or sunsets are not often in dispute, and someone who was willing to agree that preferences among natural phenomena are not governed by law might feel that the important question had not been broached.

A law of taste, then, would have the form: ‘For all *S* (*S* being a qualified subject), any *x* (where *x* is a work of art, a poem, a sonata, etc.) that has property ϕ will be *pro tanto* a cause of pleasure to

S.' The '*pro tanto*' qualification is important because it recognizes the fact that one and the same work of art may please in some respect and displease in another; it allows room for critical deliberation, the weighing of virtues against defects which precedes the all-things-considered verdict. Let us assume that I (MM) am a qualified subject in the areas of, say, music and literature: a law of taste with the appropriate scope would then predict my likes and dislikes. The hypothesis 'Work *O*, since it has property ϕ , will be liked by MM' is confirmed or disconfirmed on the occasion of the presentation of *O* to me. Although my smiles, applause, yawns, or fidgeting may be noted by my companions, I am in a privileged position with respect to confirmation and so well situated to discover the laws that determine my preferences and (by extension) the preferences of others who satisfy the 'qualified subject' requirement. It need not be assumed that I have insight into the *basis* of my disposition to be pleased by works of art that are ϕ : half-forgotten influences, childhood conditioning, or unconscious wishes may be involved. It is my own pleasure that is accessible to introspection: the psychogenesis of my susceptibility is a different story. But this poses no special problem: a law may be well established even though (as Hume keeps insisting) its 'secret springs' remain hidden. The question I need to consider is whether my tastes in music and in literature can be generalized in a way that would qualify them as law-governed.

There is certainly *something* that I learn from past experiences – something that I use in making the predictions that guide my present choice. Flipping a coin is not the usual way of deciding what novel to buy or what concert to attend. I seem to draw on the knowledge that is characterized by C. I. Lewis as 'knowing what one likes.'

The wise man is he who knows where good lies, and knows how to act so that it may be attained. Even to know what one likes is a form of knowledge. Whether knowing what one likes is veridical knowledge of objective values or not, is a matter calling for further consideration. But without prejudice to that question, it may be observed that one who knows what he likes possesses that kind of knowledge which consists in the ability to predict the accrual or non-accrual, under given conditions, of value-quality in his

own experience. One who knows, for example, that he likes Bach and dislikes Stravinsky, may be as great a musical ignoramus as anyone chooses to allege, but when he looks at the concert program, he knows what to expect. His value-prediction has verifiable content and possesses genuine cognitive significance.¹

Let me imagine myself in the situation that Lewis describes and ask whether what I know in 'knowing what I like' gives me 'the ability to predict the accrual or non-accrual, under given conditions, of value-quality in my own experience'. In what sense is it true that when I look at the concert program, I 'know what to expect'? Suppose that all the program says is 'Music by Bach'. I might say to myself, 'In that case, I'll like it since it will comprise some or others of the following: the Two Part Inventions, the Three Part Inventions, the Mass in B Minor, the Italian Concerto . . .' (I know the entire corpus.) But whatever its reliability as a basis for prediction, the generalization here is not a law because it is not lawlike. It does not warrant an inference to unfamiliar pieces since by hypothesis there are none. Nor does it support counterfactuals on the order of 'If *Le Sacre du Printemps* had been written by Bach, I would have liked it'. Let us assume, then, that my generalization is based on samples: I have heard and enjoyed some but not all of Bach's music. Then there is a problem with the antecedent: the music I enjoyed in the past was described as having been composed by Bach, but typographer's errors are possible and there are (so I am told) genuine disputes over attribution. (Let's say that some pieces credited to Bach are really by Telemann.) Ought I in that case revise the antecedent to 'If I *believe* that a piece of music was composed by Bach, then I'm sure I'll like it?' (Someone else might make that claim about me, but it would be understood as a sort of Pavlovian joke: 'She salivates every time she hears the phrase "by Bach"'.) There is a further difficulty: accurate, first-personal prediction is not the only function imagined for laws of taste. Those who talk of 'good-making characteristics' envisage situations in which I can *account* for my pleasure in speaking to a neophyte, someone who is in the process of becoming a qualified subject. Imagine that other person to be Colette; she listens to Bach, and the phrase that comes to her mind is

'a musical sewing-machine'. I want to explain to her why I like that music and 'because I have every reason to believe that it was written by Bach' is not going to help. For one thing, she already knows that: her interest (if it exists) is in knowing what there is in the music that anyone could find to like. By the same token, she will not be impressed by a purely autobiographical explanation, like 'It was the first piece I ever learned to play. I adored my piano teacher, etc.'

Any statement, including any generalization, that purports to relate an affect to its cause is, in an obvious sense, a 'psychological' claim, but although works of art may be made to serve a diagnostic function (the 'subject' may be an individual or, as for archaeologists, a vanished culture), in less special circumstances the focus of attention and the center of interest are in the work of art as distinct from the mental idiosyncrasies of a particular perceiver or of the artist who created it.

And yet (to go back to 'knowing what one likes') it does seem that, provided I have relatively stable tastes, a consistent pattern of successful prediction suggests that there is lawlike generalization in the offing. Imagine that, acting on the belief that it was written by Bach, I listen to a piece of music and, as I predicted, it pleases me. I subsequently discover that experts are divided: some say Telemann was the composer and others say Pachelbel. Since, in any event, I *did* like it, perhaps I should revise my hypothesis to read, 'If it is by Bach or Telemann or Pachelbel, then I'm sure it will please me.' This suggests a way around the previous difficulty, since there are features that are common to the music of these three composers – harmonic, contrapuntal, and structural similarities that define baroque music. Perhaps it is among these features that I should look for a value for ϕ . They have been identified and analyzed by musicologists and might simply be listed in the antecedent of my conditional, which will now promise that any work in the baroque 'style' is a work that I will like. But though my generalization is now lawlike, it begins to look unpromising as a basis for prediction. The characteristics of baroque music are easy to reproduce: composition students learn early on how to write polyphony, and computers can be programmed to turn out an unlimited and indefinitely various number of 'compositions' that

meet the requirements. Do my recollected experiences of Bach (or Telemann or Pachelbel) give me any reason at *all* to think that I will enjoy whatever the computer offers me? Lewis is right on one point: I do know 'what to expect'; what I don't know is whether the expected, once it arrives, will please me. That is to say that my powers fail at the crucial point, namely 'the ability to predict the accrual or non-accrual of value-quality' in my own experience.

But mightn't there be persons who just *do* like *any* music as long as it is in the baroque style? It is not impossible, but I have never met such a person. What is true is that getting to know music of a particular period takes time and patience. As a novice, I may find a certain style congenial and yet be unable to tell one composer – even one piece – from another, unable to distinguish Bach from 'Bach-type' computer music. We learn from experience. (It once seemed to me that Elizabethan drama was marvelous; but then after a certain amount of time spent on Webster, Marlowe, Peele, *et al.*, it came to me that what I had thought was Elizabethan was really Shakespearean, and later still that it was clearly identifiable only in three plays.) But suppose that my musical or literary education had been, for one reason or another, arrested and that I had never gone beyond the stage of liking anything in the baroque style or any tale of violence projected with flamboyant imagery in iambic pentameter. Wouldn't I then be entitled to affirm on the basis of evidence a lawlike generalization concerning my own taste?

The question is complicated: let us change the example and suppose (since Bach and Shakespeare cloud the picture) that what I like is detective stories. At the airport newstand I morosely survey the paperbacks, and it is borne in on me that Agatha Christie is dead. I note, however, that P. D. James is touted as one who has 'inherited the crown' and this moves me to buy two of her books. They turn out to be pretty good – lead to an 'accrual of value-quality' in experience – but nonetheless disappointing. My expectations with respect to the genre are fulfilled; there is the murder, the detective, the suspects, the false clues, and so forth, and yet something vital is missing. Hard to pin down: perhaps it is James's rather heavy forays into depth psychology or maybe a tendency to dwell in a non-Agatha-

Christie manner on the grislier of the grisly details. Not, in any event, what I had hoped for, but how shall I word the prediction that led to my choice? 'If *Death of a Nightingale* is a detective story and has that specially pleasing Agatha-Christie quality, then I will like it.' But here the generalization, although lawlike, is uninteresting: what it amounts to is that if a detective story resembles detective stories I have enjoyed in respect of my enjoying it, then I will enjoy it. How about, 'If it's a detective story, I'm bound to like it'? But that is something I do not believe, nor will it help to add a *pro tanto* modifier. (I have read *bona fide* detective stories that were irredeemably boring and awful.) The only way to save the *pro tanto* version is to make it uninteresting: 'If there is even one quality that pleases me, then the work will please me to some extent.'

The test for my general hypothesis is as follows: try to come up with a lawlike generalization about your own preferences and ask yourself (a) whether it is interesting, and (b) if it is, whether you actually believe it. My own findings are entirely negative. That the test be in the first person is important: a curious snobbery persuades us that while we ourselves are sensitive and complex creatures, other people's likes and dislikes are thoroughly routine and easily predictable. There are laws of taste, in other words, but they don't apply to me. This odd belief may owe something to the fact that in the art world and the world of entertainment, there are discernable fashions and trends. Movie makers and clothes designers hire market-research experts to study opinion samples and make projections which enable the producers to anticipate and cater to what the public appears to want. The resulting generalizations, whether or not they are dignified by the title 'laws', are not adapted to serving the purposes that Lewis had in mind. Suppose it is established that in a certain month a significant percentage of movie-goers describe *Jaws II* as 'highly enjoyable'. One *might* reason, 'Since I'm an average sort of person, I'll probably enjoy it too,' but such an inference, shaky at best, is not based on 'knowing what I like', in the sense that Lewis intends the phrase.

The temptation to believe that other people can make successful predictions based on laws of taste may originate in a second way: suppose that you and I are adventurous eclectics: we like to

submit ourselves to what is novel, 'experimental', *avant-garde*. We perceive that there are many who have no such urge and whose tastes are restricted in range. A man, say, may read nothing but detective stories or, having heard part of a piece by Stravinsky, decide not to listen to any more Stravinsky. Both may make choices in accord with a policy, but the policy is not a law of taste. The detective-story addict does not say, 'As long as it's a detective story, I'll enjoy it,' but rather, 'Unless it's a detective story, I won't read it.' Since we can predict his choices, we imagine that he is making successful predictions about the 'accrual of value-quality' in his experience. But, of course, that need not be true; he might enjoy some much more than others or perhaps not really 'enjoy' any of them. (Reading can serve as an analgesic.) The snobbishness comes in thinking of persons who have a narrow range of preference in the way that Descartes thought of animals, namely as if they were machines.

One last try at explaining 'knowing what one likes' in a way that would make it plausible to think of first-personal predictions as based on laws of taste. Instead of considering particular composers whose work I have liked in the past or definable *kinds* of music, imagine that, checking the concert program, I say, 'Since it's the *B Minor Mass*, I know that I'll like it.' People say such things, and what could be a better reason for going to a concert? But what is the law that I here appeal to? Is it that *anything* that qualifies as a performance of the *B Minor Mass* will please me? No one could seriously hold such a belief. In the passage I have been trying to interpret, Lewis speaks of predicting the 'accrual of value-quality' under 'given conditions'. What he means is 'optimal conditions'; and, as far as I can see, there is no way of spelling out, or even sketching, the optimal conditions which will not result in an uninteresting law. Think of the things that could go wrong: the conductor is drunk; my feet hurt; the intonation of the strings is off; the person beside me snores; a fire breaks out . . . I will enjoy it *Deo volente*, if 'all goes well', which is to say that I will enjoy it unless some one or another of indefinitely numerous contingencies prevents me from enjoying it. But then how to account for the grain of truth in what Lewis says? Although it is true that my knowledge (in the sense of acquaintance) of the *B Minor Mass* is grounded in

remembered performances, the lawlike generalization that quantifies over performances is, as I have suggested, either an uninteresting law or one that no sane person would believe. It would be better to think of my reasoning as based, not on any law, but on projection of a particular judgment of taste under its avowal aspect. 'The *B Minor Mass* is beautiful (has artistic merit, etc.) implicates (tenselessly) 'It gives me pleasure.' Remembered pleasure fosters hope, and it is hope, in contrast with prediction on the basis of law, that guides my choice. 'It's the *B Minor Mass*' articulates one plausible *kind* of reason for attending a concert. (It can't be the *only* kind: otherwise none of us would have got any further than 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'.) The education of taste is possible because there are reasons for choice other than 'knowing what one likes'. There are many such reasons: simple curiosity about another time or culture, boredom with the familiar – through overexposure Bach does begin to *sound* to me like a 'musical sewing-machine'. Then there are the enthusiasms of my friends or my heroes. (Young men on the Grand Tour would make a point of following in the footsteps of Goethe, to stand at the very spots from which he had admired the view.) We might be inclined to think that anticipation of pleasure based on hearsay (or superstition) is a less reliable guide than anticipation based on recollected pleasure. The truth is that both are so unreliable that comparisons are pointless. Stanley Cavell speaks of the element of risk involved in 'submitting ourselves' to modernist art,² but the risk is endemic: how important disappointment seems depends on the level of our expectation and the extent of our investment. Sometimes it may be no more than a wasted afternoon. But it could be significant; I might spend five years learning Greek in order to read the *Iliad* only to find it, in the end, a bore. (In his travel diary, Herbert Spencer wrote: 'Visited Niagara Falls; exactly as anticipated.' Why does this strike us as funny?)

12. In 'Psychology as Philosophy' (1974) Donald Davidson draws a distinction which can be extended to the present context. He argues that although a particular action can be displayed as intentional by citing the beliefs and desires that were its cause, it is not possible to specify in general the conditions that are necessary and suf-

ficient for an action's being intentional. As a consequence, there can be, as he puts it, no 'serious' laws connecting reasons and actions.

By a serious law, I mean more than a statistical generalization (the statistical laws of physics are serious because they give sharply fixed probabilities, which spring from the nature of the theory); it must be a law that, while it may have provisos limiting its application, allows us to determine in advance whether or not the conditions of application are satisfied. It is an error to compare a truism like 'If a man wants to eat an acorn omlette, then he generally will if the opportunity exists and no other desire overrides' with a law that says how fast a body will fall in a vacuum. It is an error, because in the latter case but not in the former, we can tell in advance whether the condition holds, and we know what allowance to make if it doesn't.³

My suggestion is that there are no laws of taste that are serious: some people are partial to baroque music (or to Bach), some to detective stories (or to Agatha Christie). Such a bias will express itself naturally in choosing what we listen to or what we read, and the choice will involve the anticipation or the hope of pleasure. But nothing I have learned from past experience gives me grounds for saying in advance of a work by Bach or of a detective story that provided it manifests a particular feature, I will be pleased by it. In the recent literature, Arnold Isenberg was the first to state this point clearly. In 1949 he wrote:

There is not in all the world's criticism a single purely descriptive statement concerning which one is prepared to say beforehand, 'If it is true, I shall like that work so much the better.'⁴

But perhaps, as pro-theorists like to argue, it is just a matter of time, and once the data are more thoroughly analyzed, what Lewis calls 'the positive science of aesthetics' will emerge.

[I]t is an obvious fact – and no criticism of anybody need be read into the observation of it – that the science of aesthetics remains largely undeveloped. Subsidiary principles – 'principles of composition' in one or another of the fine arts – are available in considerable number and are fairly well attested. But these are about the only

positive content of it which is presently assured. As has been observed, there is not even as yet any general agreement amongst aestheticians as to the categories in terms of which such positive 'laws should be formulated.'⁵

In a footnote Lewis adds the comment:

It is of course true that particular aesthetic judgments do not necessarily wait upon the development of the positive science, nor presume command of it. In any field, the development of the positive science requires an antecedently determined body of particular truths. There were correct logical judgments before Aristotle, geometrical determinations before Euclid, and attested physical facts before Galileo and Newton. Had there not been, these positive sciences could never have arisen.⁶

But the analogy here is not quite right: Socrates knew (and sometimes exploited) the difference between a good argument and a bad one; Aristotle abstracted from rules observed in practice, gave them names and developed their consequences in a systematic way. No subsequent argument has satisfied the Aristotelian conditions for being a valid argument, without being valid. Aristotle also recognized that *Oedipus Rex* had great dramatic merit, and in seeking to analyze the sources of its power was led to formulate precepts for the aspiring dramatist. The results, although they improve our understanding of Sophocles and of Greek tragedy in general, do not have anything analogous to the status that belongs to the rules for valid argument. In speaking of 'subsidiary principles', Lewis may have had Aristotle's suggestions in mind. But Lewis is mistaken in saying that such 'principles of composition' are 'fairly well attested': it is a truism of literary history that Aristotelian 'correctness' is compatible with artistic failure and that there are dramatic masterworks, such as *Antony and Cleopatra*, that flatly contravene the 'rules'.

'But of course', someone might say, 'a work of genius transcends the rules', thus invoking a picture credited to the Romantics – its actual origins are neo-classical or earlier – in which conformity to 'principles of composition' will guarantee a modicum of success (measured in terms of the 'accrual of value-quality' in experi-

ence) while allowing for the occasional prodigy, the artist whose extraordinary and inexplicable powers enable (and entitle) him to 'snatch a grace beyond the reach of art'. Every 'positive science', it might be argued, has to live with phenomena that 'defy explanation'; pharmacology thrives despite the fact that it cannot explain the benign effects of salicylic acid. (The ancients chewed on willow-leaves; we ingest aspirin by the megaton.) But the picture is false to the facts: audiences derive pleasure from, say *Jaws II*; audiences (not necessarily an exclusive disjunction) derive pleasure from *Oedipus Rex*. The former phenomenon is not less but *more* mysterious than the latter. (*Jaws* itself is a puzzle; why should anyone want more of the same? And why do we take it for granted that appeal to a low taste is transparent?) In *Oedipus*, by contrast, there is, as far as causes of pleasure are concerned, an embarrassment of riches: there is the poetry – in itself it could redeem a weak plot – and then, what might have survived less exhilarating poetry, the plot, and the 'character' – in short those elements which Aristotle found worth noting. And here is a second way in which the Lewis analogy is off target: not only are there 'antecedently determined' truths in the history of the arts, there are (without benefit of 'positive science') accepted accounts of what, in particular cases, does the determining; take Aristotle's analysis of *Oedipus*. Isenberg, in the paper cited above, puts the point well:

Most of us believe that the idea of progress applies to science, does not apply to art, applies in some unusual and not very clear sense, to philosophy. What about criticism? Are there 'discoveries' and 'contributions' in this field? Is it reasonable to expect better evaluations of art after a thousand years of investigation than before? The question is not a simple one: it admits of different answers on different interpretations. But I do think that some critical judgments have been and are every day being 'proved' as well as in the nature of the case they can be proved. I think we have already numerous passages which are not to be corrected or improved upon. And if this opinion is right, then it could not be the case that the validation of critical judgments waits upon the discovery of aesthetic laws.⁷

In summary, the idea that there are laws of taste yet to be discovered encounters two obstacles: (i) candidate laws prove to be either uninteresting or readily disconfirmed; (ii) the claims of particular judgments of taste have been 'validated' in the sense that particular critical passages are acknowledged to offer insight into what, in a particular work, causes our pleasure.

Isenberg thinks it is at least possible to *imagine* a law of taste and to see that if there were one, it would be of no critical use:

Let us suppose even that we *had* some law which stated that a certain color combination, a certain melodic sequence, a certain type of dramatic hero has everywhere and always a positive emotional effect. To the extent that this law holds, there is, of course, that much less disagreement in criticism; but there is no better method for resolving disagreement. We are not more fully convinced in our own judgment because we know its explanation; and we cannot hope to convince an imaginary opponent by appealing to this explanation, which by hypothesis does not hold for him.⁸

I am not so sure that the supposition can be made intelligible: suppose that the preferred color combination is red and green and that it can be represented by reference to the color cone as RG. If it has 'always and everywhere a positive emotional effect', then its power must be independent of say, belief contexts; perception of RG causes pleasure in the way that taking drugs causes pleasure, and this seems remote from the conception of a law of *taste*. But suppose it came to pass? How would we respond? Would all houses and cars be painted RG? Would we never get tired, or cease to notice it? Would timid artists eschew a wider palette? (Perhaps RG would be used to redeem weak painting as depictions of kittens and sad-eyed waifs are used.) In any event, Isenberg is right about the consequences for criticism: we would be no better off than we are. If of two RG paintings one causes more pleasure than the other, then the explanation must lie in differences of composition, form, execution, and the like. If even a tiny little RG area was a 'good-making characteristic' then some increment of pleasure needs no explanation and calls for no comment.

Principles of taste have been supposed to provide logical support for the judgment of taste under its normative aspect, that is, considered as a verdict. If there are no (serious) laws of taste, then Beardsley's account in which by specifying a 'good-making characteristic' one provides *ipso facto* a 'criterion' or a 'good reason', cannot be correct. On the other hand, the elision of the causal and the criterial which Beardsley leaves unexplained, invites the Humean question about deriving an 'ought' from an 'is'. If, as I have been supposing, laws of taste are imagined to be causal laws, straightforwardly descriptive, then, even if there were such laws, the question of principles or 'criteria' would remain open. Conversely, from the fact (as it seems) that there are no laws of taste it does not follow that there are no principles of taste. (In parallel: that there are no laws of motivation does not entail that no moral principles are valid.) Nonetheless, once the distinction between laws and principles is sharpened, the question of how alleged principles of taste acquire their authority becomes a pressing question. If property ϕ is randomly distributed over works of art that please me and fail to please me, why should I allow a principle to the effect that ϕ is a virtue in works of art to figure as a premise in my critical reasoning?

Notice that the statistical generalizations mentioned in the preceding section are of no help: that works with property ϕ are liked by 70 per cent of a given population provides at best grounds for a chancy forecast. It does not provide what Lewis has in mind when he speaks of a principle by reference to which we may 'recognize the aesthetically valuable in cases of doubt'.

One instant (but drastic) remedy is available: one might, following Santayana, discount the term 'verdict' as a courtesy title and claim that the substance of the judgment of taste is exhausted in the avowal that, on our present assumptions, it implicates. Independent of whether there are or are not laws of taste, principles of taste are then displayed as pure sham; to enunciate a 'principle' is simply to project one's own spontaneous and 'ultimately irrational' impulse.⁹ But Santayana, as has been noted, offers neither arguments nor evidence in support of a thesis which, as he himself acknowledges, runs counter to everyday beliefs. If we take the normative aspects of the judgment of taste at face value and allow the term 'verdict'

to stand – if, further, we assume with the pro-theorists that all ‘good reasons’ must have the deductive backing of principles of taste, then we will have to sever the link between verdicts and avowals. I may reason my way to a favorable verdict of *O* by showing that *O* exhibits ‘criterial feature’ ϕ and leave completely open the question of whether *O* is a cause of pleasure to me. There are indeed philosophers who are prepared to accept this consequence. Joseph Margolis writes:

If I judge a particular work of art to be good, I am bound, on demand, to supply the justifying reasons; I have not yet supplied them in issuing the judgment. But if the justifying reasons are admitted to be true, and to be the proper sort of reasons sufficient for the finding, one cannot withhold the finding on presentation of the reasons.¹⁰

However:

The finding or judgment (or verdict) is not an expression of taste and is only contingently related to our actual taste . . . It is altogether conceivable that one likes what one judges to be artistically poor or fails to appreciate what one knows to be excellent.¹¹

What Margolis says is not exactly false but, so to speak, out of touch. I am *not* obligated to produce a justification, still less a ‘proof’ for every judgment that I make; how *could* I be? I do, on occasion, try to show what it is about a particular work that leads me to think it a good work of art, but unless I *liked* the work in question, this exercise would be bizarre. Much that is nonstandard is no doubt ‘conceivable’, but the question opens complicated issues that extend beyond aesthetics, and jauntiness is out of place. A plain truth may be dismaying to a degree that blocks acceptance: an obligation may be genuine and yet perceived in context as one that ought not to be discharged. Our affective life, no less than our cognitive and practical, is full of hesitation, missteps and obliquities: a complex work of art judged good on the whole may have its defective, disturbing aspects. Our taste in general is apt to be in various degrees corrupt; we have, and may know that we have, certain blind spots; age may impair capacity so

that, like Wordsworth, we recollect a beauty in what no longer has the power to please.

It is not now as it hath been of yore; –
Turn wheresoe’er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.¹²

But to speak of confusion, mistake or loss is to presume a norm, and the norm surely is to judge beautiful what one finds beautiful, and to find something beautiful is to find it a source of pleasure. (Consider Kant’s wild rose or the simple melodic line of Schubert’s *Lindenbaum*: ask yourself whether you can make sense of the notion of judging beautiful what you yourself find boring or repellent.)

Like other pro-theorists, Margolis cannot think of any examples of ‘good reasons’. Thus, although he claims that such reasons provide ‘fairly clear-cut criteria that are decisive’,¹³ yet

the central difficulty in evaluation, even in evaluation by professionals, seems to be that, apart from applying academic canons, evaluating works of art is characteristically informal, in the sense that one cannot say in advance what the appropriate *set* of criteria is for evaluating this or that object.¹⁴

Criteria that cannot be specified ‘in advance’ are, one might think, no criteria. Nonetheless the incoherence is instructive and suggests a possibility which I shall explore at the beginning of the following section.

In summary: Kant thought that the *First Thesis* [FT], namely that there are no principles of taste, could be established on grounds that are completely *a priori*, as perhaps it can. I have been trying to show that by following an indirect route one can arrive at Kant’s destination with a minimum of theoretical apparatus. I argue that there are no serious laws of taste and that, without laws, the conception of principles (or criteria) assumes an unattractively arbitrary aspect. There is the added fact that those who believe there *must* be principles have not been able to say what they are, even though we are given to understand that they are in continual use. Finally, I would say, as of laws of taste, that no one believes (really

believes) in principles of taste. In his informal moments, Kant himself appeals to experience and observation. Thus:

If anyone reads me his poem, or brings me to a play, which, all said and done, fails to commend itself to my taste, then let him adduce Batteux or Lessing, or still older and more famous critics of taste, with all the host of rules laid down by them, as a proof of the beauty of his poem; let certain passages particularly displeasing to me accord completely with the rules of beauty (as set out by these critics and universally recognized): I stop my ears: I do not want to hear any reasons or any arguments about the matter. I would prefer to suppose that those rules of the critics were at fault, or at least have no application, than to allow my judgment to be determined by *a priori* proofs.¹⁵

Again:

There can . . . be no rule according to which anyone is able to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful. Whether a dress, a house, or a flower is beautiful is a matter upon which one declines to allow one's judgment to be swayed by any reasons or principles. We want to get a look at the Object with our own eyes, just as if our delight depended on sensation.¹⁶

Kant presents *FT* as an *a priori* truth, as obvious to the layman as to the philosopher. The layman simply rejects appeal to principles; the philosopher sees that the very idea of a principle of taste involves contradiction. What responses on the part of the layman are typical is a matter of observation, and in my opinion Kant's finding is correct. But the second, stronger claim needs reasoned support. From one point of view the whole of the 'First Part' of the *Third Critique* provides what is called for: once you realize how it is that the domain of taste is an autonomous domain and you see why the claims of the judgment of taste need a transcendental deduction – in short, once you have grasped Kant's aesthetic theory, the *FT* will be recognized as a necessary truth, one that someone who accepts the theory cannot consistently deny. The trouble is that Kant's theory, as even the most sympathetic reader must admit, is not *self-evidently* adequate: there are real problems of interpretation and a

number of unresolved ambiguities. (Paul Guyer has argued persuasively that Kant is addressing two different questions, one logical, the other psychological, and that some of the obscurities of his argument come from his attempt to deal with them simultaneously.) Moreover, it was only rather late in his career that Kant himself realized that the perplexities of aesthetics call for formal philosophical treatment. His earlier view had been that there are *no* interesting *a priori* truths, that empirical generalizations are all that is possible and all that is required. (Whether Kant entertained the possibility of actual 'laws of taste' in the sense in which I understand the term is not clear to me.) However that may be, to claim that *FT* is not merely true but *necessarily* true is to assume a burden of proof – one that I would just as soon decline. In support of *FT* I want to argue that attempts to deny it have an unmistakably hollow ring: nobody believes – really believes – either in principles or in laws of taste. The reader may think that my claim is no less high-handed than Kant's. What about the philosophers who appear to be committed, either explicitly or (like the anti-theorists) through inadvertence, to laws and principles of taste? I grant the powerful impression that no good will ever come of a proposal that leans on the distinction between 'believes' and 'really believes' and will try not to lean on it. I have no clear view of the limits of 'possible' belief or of epistemic logic in general. All I can do is cast a shadow of doubt.

13. Let us consider Kant's modal version of *FT* according to which a principle of taste that supports an inference to a judgment of taste is 'absolutely impossible'. Two kinds of counterclaim might count as denials, one the contrary, the other, the contradictory of *FT*. The contrary would be the claim that inference-supporting principles, far from being impossible, are necessary. The contradictory would be the claim that since there are in fact principles of taste in use, sanctioning inferences acknowledged as valid, it cannot be that principles of taste are 'impossible'. The parallel counterclaims with respect to laws of taste would be (i) there *must* be laws of taste (although perhaps yet to be discovered), and (ii) there *is* a law of taste, namely *L*, which is widely acknowledged, which explains (or predicts) affective response.

The reasons adduced in support of the contrary of *FT* can be briefly summarized: (i) There must be principles of taste since otherwise every verdict would have equal status and every work of art equal value – an unacceptable consequence. To reject subjectivism is *ipso facto* to acknowledge principles of taste. (ii) Critical description of a work of art is selective, for example, mentions ‘complex formal structure’ but not ‘weight or insurable value’. Where there is selection there must be a reason for selection, and the reason must be that the features mentioned are taken to be *prima facie* ‘criterial features’, that is, principles of taste. Thus every remark about a work of art ‘presupposes’ principles of taste (and hence ‘presupposes’ a theory) even if the critic in question does not acknowledge or does not know what the principles are.¹⁷ The argument for laws of taste follows the same pattern: if there are no laws, then every positive affective response, for example, every case of someone’s being pleased by a work of art, would be inexplicable – an unacceptable consequence which runs counter to the assumption that every event has a cause. And further, critics do offer explanations of the powers of works of art to affect the viewer or hearer, and hence laws of taste, even if undiscovered, are ‘presupposed’. The first argument for principles and laws depends on the assumption that in each case there is one and only one alternative and that that alternative is unacceptable. But none of the authors I have mentioned gives any reason at all for the assumption; in the case of principles it is supposed to be *evident* that either aesthetics is the exact counterpart of ethics or it is nothing. Therefore the argument is unconvincing. The second line – what might be called the ‘M. Jourdain argument’ – is sophistic in the way in which Hampshire’s appeal to the unavoidability of choice is sophistic, and cannot but strike us as somewhat silly. It does not, of course, follow from the fact that an argument is defective that its conclusion is false, still less that its conclusion is not believed.

But let us consider what it *is* to believe that there must be principles and laws of taste. What is most striking, as has been noted, is the reluctance on the part of those who hold the view to cite any examples. In the case of laws, there is at least a surface plausibility to the notion that laws of taste, when finally formulated, will be the con-

sequences of very sophisticated neurophysiological theories which are still in the making. But that won’t work for principles: some critical verdicts, we are told, are in fact justified; no justification is possible save by reference to principle, but no single example of a justifying principle can be given. (Imagine, by way of analogy, someone who held that moral decisions are familiar occurrences, that no decision is possible except by reference to moral principles, but who claimed that because of the ‘complexity of the subject matter’ it is not possible to cite any moral principle.)

It seems to me, in short, that what is presented as the contrary to *FT* is a belief that lacks content. One can conjecture that in the background lurk some true and sensible thoughts, such as that an aesthetic theory, as a theory, must provide principles of some sort and that part of the task of a theory would be to give an account of the procedures by which judgments of taste are justified or validated (or imagined to be justified or validated). But such sensible reflections are not inconsistent with *FT* and so cannot count as contraries.

As for the alleged contradictory of *FT*, we can turn to Beardsley, the most candid and forthcoming of the pro-theorists. A critic, he observes, might say that ‘grandeur of imagery’ is a ‘good-making feature’ of Wordsworth’s *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*, and that ‘vagueness of theme’ is one of its defects.¹⁸ Beardsley asks us to consider whether, supposing we accept the critic’s claim, we are not committed to the generalizations ‘Grand imagery is always a merit in poetry’ and ‘Vague themes are always a defect in poetry’. Drawing on the distinction – one that he might be persuaded to admit – examples are to be thought of as candidate laws, laying down conditions with respect to the ‘accrual of value-quality in experience’. As laws, they are uninteresting: there is no procedure that could confirm the truth of ‘The imagery is grand’ that would not simultaneously confirm ‘There is at least something in this poem that pleases me.’ Were the imagery, though large-scale, displeasing, it would be characterized not as ‘grand’, but as ‘overblown’ or ‘grandiose’. Now to every uninteresting law of taste there corresponds what I shall call an ‘innocuous’ principle of taste. Thus if Beardsley’s generalizations are construed as principles, what is proposed is that if the imagery of a poem has

the merit of grandeur, then the poem as a whole has some merit. Such a criterion can never lead us astray; what satisfies the antecedent satisfies the consequent. There are various conceptions of belief, and perhaps some would allow a place in my catalogue of beliefs for uninteresting laws and innocuous principles. (If the principle of identity is included, why not?) On the other hand, 'believes *p*' is contrasted with 'disbelieves *p*' or 'believes *not-p*', and it isn't clear that those expressions have any application in this case – which is to say that we don't know what belief in an innocuous principle of taste *amounts to* and hence we may doubt whether such a belief should be described as a belief in the contradictory of *FT*.

Of course, one may not *see* that a principle of taste is innocuous. (On first inspection, 'Where there is no property, there is no theft,' might be taken as a summary of antropolitical findings.) How could something that seems so obvious be overlooked? I believe that the explanation is as follows: in contrast with the generalizations to which they are supposed to commit us, the two claims about the Wordsworth *Ode*, namely that grandeur of imagery is one of its merits and vagueness of theme one of its defects, are *not* uninteresting. Indeed, I would argue that both are false: vagueness of theme is not a defect in the *Ode*, for the theme is not vague; it is in clear and poignant focus. The imagery, on the other hand, strikes me as unimpressive. 'Grandeur', a term that fits the imagery of, say, *Samson Agonistes* or *Antony and Cleopatra*, seems entirely out of place in application to Wordsworth. I disagree with Beardsley, but our disagreement is surely closer to a disagreement on a point of fact than on a matter of principle. (It is not as if he believed in truth-telling while I believed nothing more virtuous than a successful lie, we do not live in different worlds.) Indeed, we agree that the *Ode* is a successful poem: it is just that what he sees as a redeeming feature I see as in need of redemption. There is no reason to think the difference irresolvable; if he were interested, I think I could persuade him that my view is correct.

Critical debate allows for significant differences, and it is only when these are misrepresented as oppositions of principle that triviality ensues. What masks the triviality is the proviso – a point on which all concerned are most emphatic – that a feature becomes 'good-making'

only in context and the 'reason' that cites the feature a 'good reason' only *pro tanto*. Thus Beardsley writes:

It does not seem that the contribution of each feature of an aesthetic object can be considered in an atomistic fashion . . . We might hold that to claim brilliant imagery as a merit in one poem is to commit yourself to some general principle about the capacity of grand imagery to help along poems, at least poems in which certain other features are present.¹⁹

He continues (disconcertingly):

But to commit yourself to the existence of such a principle is, of course, not to be able to state it . . .

The critic may have a hunch that in the *Ode* the grandeur of imagery is a good-making feature, but then it would become a critical question whether it is always such or whether its being such depends upon being associated with other features.²⁰

Notice that 'Grandeur of imagery is always a poetic merit', understood as an innocuous principle, is independent of context, true no matter what, even if, for example, I am right and Beardsley is wrong about the imagery of the *Ode*. So *that* cannot be what he has in mind. Suppose that in defense of his particular claim, he cites the lines:

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home:²¹

and focuses on the phrase 'trailing clouds of glory' as an instance of 'grandeur of imagery'. Considered 'in an atomistic fashion', the phrase has perhaps some slight merit but certainly does not tempt us to suppose that some mediocre poem would be 'helped along' if 'trailing clouds of glory' could somehow be worked into it. As Beardsley says, it is a merit only when 'certain other features are present'. Let us call the requisite additional features the 'supportive context' of the phrase in question. Let $\emptyset$ be the feature or features that comprise the supportive context. Then the putative principle will be to the effect

that 'x is $\emptyset$ and contains the phrase "trailing clouds of glory"' picks out a good-making feature for poems and qualifies as a 'good reason' in favor of a positive verdict. But what value can we assign to $\emptyset$? If it is spelled out in innocuous principles then 'trailing clouds of glory' will not be supported by $\emptyset$: indeed it will be dispensable, since any phrase at all, conjoined with poetic merit, will establish a modicum of over-all poetic merit. What is the alternative? Suppose $\emptyset$ is 'being in the form of an ode'. Then the resulting principle is unbelievable: 'trailing clouds of glory' will not add luster to just any old ode. No, the only plausible value for $\emptyset$ is the complex feature, 'x is a poem that goes as follows: "There was a time when meadow, grove and stream . . ."' And this is to say that 'trailing clouds of glory' is an image that contributes to the merit of Wordsworth's *Ode*. I agree, though it takes more than one good image to justify 'grandeur of imagery'.

In summary: by way of defending my claim, namely that no one believes the denial of *FT*, I distinguished the contrary, 'There must be principles (or laws) of taste' from the contradictory, 'There is at least one law of taste which is as follows . . .' Philosophers who affirm one or the other counterclaim may be confused but they are not dolts. It is true that some coherent account of critical reasoning is called for; it is also true that particular works of art have particular merits and particular defects. What I have suggested is that neither claim in itself counts as a denial of *FT* and that unless one wants to allow uninteresting laws and correlative innocuous principles as objects of belief, nothing much remains.

Notes

- 1 C. I. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (La Salle: Open Court, 1946), p. 372.

- 2 Stanley Cavell, 'Music Discomposed', in *Art, Mind, and Religion*, ed. W. H. Capitan and D. D. Merrill (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), p. 188 (Reprinted in Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* New York: Scribner's, 1969.)
- 3 Donald Davidson, 'Psychology as Philosophy', in *Philosophy of Psychology*, ed. S. C. Brown (London: Macmillan and New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975), p. 233. (Reprinted in Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.)
- 4 Arnold Isenberg, 'Critical Communication', *Philosophical Review*, 54, 4(1949), p. 164.
- 5 Lewis, p. 469.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Isenberg, p. 160.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Scribner's, 1896), p. 17.
- 10 Joseph Margolis, *The Language of Art and Art Criticism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), p. 138.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Wordsworth, *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*.
- 13 Margolis, p. 140.
- 14 Ibid., p. 143.
- 15 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. C. Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 140.
- 16 Ibid., p. 56.
- 17 F. E. Sparshott, *The Structure of Aesthetics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 12.
- 18 Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958), p. 464.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Wordsworth, *Ode*.

Artistic Worth and Personal Taste

Jerrold Levinson

In this short article I explore two related themes, between which there is, I hope to show, a curious tension. The first is the fact of there being demonstrably better and worse artworks. The second is the undeniable importance of personal taste as regards preferences among works of art.

What should be the relationship between what one as an individual prefers in the realm of art and what is objectively artistically superior? To what degree should the former be aligned with the latter? Might there be a conflict between these two apparent values, that is, on the one hand, one's own taste in art and, on the other, what is truly better art? If there is such a conflict, in what way might it be resolved or reduced?

I. Better and Worse in the Domain of Art

i. For the purposes of this discussion, I am going to assume the existence of better and worse in artistic matters and the consequent real interest that we have in informing ourselves about such differences and in being guided by them in our aesthetic lives. I believe I have made a strong case for this elsewhere, through a free reading and

defense of Hume's famous essay "Of the Standard of Taste."¹ I there suggested that a Humean solution to the problem of taste can only respond to skepticism about the status of ideal critics, those charged by Hume with embodying the standard of taste, by showing that there is, after all, something special about ideal critics understood in a certain way, something about their relationship to the aesthetic sphere that makes it rational for anyone with an antecedent interest in the aesthetic dimension of life to attend to the recommendations of and to strive to emulate such critics, and thus something special as well about the objects identified as truly superior through winning the convergent approbation of such critics. The primary burden of a defender of a Humean solution to the problem of taste is to show, in a noncircular and non-question-begging way, why a person who is not an ideal critic should rationally seek, so far as possible, to exchange the ensemble of artistic objects that currently elicit his or her approval and enjoyment for some other ensemble that is approved and enjoyed by the sort of person he or she is not.

What needs to be explained is why critics of a certain sort are reliable indicators of what works are artistically best, in the sense of ones capable of affording better, or ultimately preferable, aesthetic experiences. What I suggested was that that could only be done by putting the accent on the special relationship that such critics bear to works

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of unquestioned value, that is, masterpieces, whose identification is in turn effected, although defeasibly, by passage of the test of time. In my view, only some form of artistic-value-as-capacity theory, appropriately coupled to a set of masterworks passing the test of time, in turn used to identify ideal critics, who then serve as measuring rods of such value generally, is adequate to resolving the questions about aesthetic objectivity that Hume's approach raises. On my proposal as to how to assemble the elements of Hume's theory, there is an answer to the real problem, an answer that remains elusive on other readings of Hume's essay.

ii. I made three claims for my response to the real problem. First, it addresses the issue that Hume was fundamentally concerned with: how to reconcile differing critical opinions about art and justify greater respect for some rather than others. Second, it assigns a role to almost all the elements highlighted in Hume's discussion of the problem, if not exactly the same role that Hume appears to assign them. Third, it offers a plausible general answer to the problem of the objectivity of judgments about goodness in art, and in such a way that the worry about why anyone should care what is truly beautiful or artistically better is dispelled or significantly allayed.

There is reason to believe, in reflecting on the nature of ideal critics understood as identified in a certain way, that works that are approved and preferred by that sort of perceiver are one's best bets, aesthetically speaking; that is, they are works most likely to provide artistic satisfaction of a high order. Here is why. Artistically good artworks will be ones that are in some measure comparable in their rewards to those masterpieces recognized universally as artistically outstanding. Artistically good artworks will thus be works favored and approved by the sort of perceiver who is capable of appreciating masterworks, who can thus gauge the extent to which the rewards of such works compare to those that acknowledged masterpieces can, under the best of conditions, afford. Such perceivers may be called ideal critics. Now, what characteristics do such perceivers notably possess? That is, what characteristics do they need in order to recognize, appreciate, and enjoy to the fullest exemplars of aesthetic excellence? Arguably, they are something like those

that appear on Hume's tally, supplemented by a few others. Perceivers of that stripe are a sort of litmus test for good art, art with superior potential to afford valuable aesthetic experience. Thus, if one is interested in aesthetic experience at all, one should be interested in what such perceivers recommend to one's attention.

Now an answer of this sort assumes at least three things that have not yet been explicitly spelled out. One is an ensemble of masterworks in a given genre that are identifiable other than as those works that earn the approval or preference of ideal critics. Two is a reason for thinking that masterworks in a given genre truly are pinnacles of artistic achievement, that is, works possessing an unusual potential to afford aesthetic satisfaction. Three is a reason for thinking that the considered preferences of ideal critics are indicative of what sorts of experiences really are better, that is, ultimately more worth having. But these assumptions can, I think, be defended.

iii. I now sketch an overall answer to the question of why ordinary art lovers should rationally be concerned to learn of, attend to, and, if possible, follow the recommendations of ideal critics, an answer that marshals most if not all of the elements invoked in Hume's essay.

First, the primary artistic value of a work of art, what Hume calls its beauty or excellence, is plausibly understood in terms of the capacity of the work, in virtue of its form and content, to afford appreciative experiences worth having.

Second, certain works of art, which we can call masterworks, masterpieces, or *chef d'oeuvres*, singularly stand the test of time. In other words, they are notably appreciated across temporal barriers—that is, their appeal is durable—and cultural barriers—that is, their appeal is wide—and they are appreciated on some level by almost all who engage with them—that is, their appeal is broad. It is thus a reasonable supposition that such works have a high artistic value, or potential to afford intrinsically valuable experience, that value being responsible for their so strikingly passing the test of time. Such a supposition would be an example of what is sometimes called "inference to the best explanation."

Third, though masterworks are thus paradigms of artistic value and incontrovertible proof of its existence, masterworks cannot directly

provide a standard of taste, that is, an effective criterion of and guide to artistic value generally. We cannot, say, directly compare a given work of art whose value is up for assessment with some masterwork in the same genre and judge it to be of value to the extent it resembles that masterwork or any other. Artistically good works of art are good in different ways, especially if they are innovative or revolutionary, and that is all the more true for artistically great ones.

Fourth, the masterworks, however, can serve as touchstones for identification of the sort of critic or judge who is a reliable indicator or identifier of artistic value, that is, capacity to afford intrinsically worthwhile experience in its varying degrees. A critic who is able to comprehend and appreciate masterworks in a given art form to their fullest is thus in the best position to compare the experiences and satisfactions afforded by a given work in that art form to the sort of experiences and satisfactions that masterworks in that art form, appropriately apprehended, can provide.

Fifth, that the experience afforded by masterworks is, all told, preferred by such a critic to the experience afforded by other works of art is indicative of its really being preferable, that is, more worth having, all told. For as John Stuart Mill famously observed, in his *Utilitarianism*, the best, and possibly the only, evidence of one satisfaction or experience being better than another is the considered and decided preference for the one over the other by those fully acquainted with and appreciative of both.

Sixth, ideal critics, identified as ones capable of appreciating to the fullest masterworks in a given art form or genre, themselves identified by passage of the test of time, have certain notable characteristics, ones that underwrite and facilitate their capacity for optimal appreciation. These characteristics are more or less those offered by Hume in his profile of true judges, though that general profile could reasonably be augmented in a number of respects and, even more clearly, supplemented by more detailed desiderata defining specific profiles of ideal critics adequate to particular art forms or genres.

Seventh, and lastly, one thus has a reason to attend to the judgments of ideal critics even if one is not such oneself, since one presumably has an interest in artistic value understood as primarily

capacity to afford aesthetic experience and in gaining access to the most rewarding such experiences possible.

More concisely, then, the justification for attending to the recommendations of ideal critics that can be constructed from elements in Hume's essay goes like this: ideal critics, ones who show themselves equal to and inclined toward the appreciation of the greatest works of art, the masterworks, and who possess the cognitive, sensory, emotional, and attitudinal traits that aid in such appreciation, where such masterworks are independently, if defeasibly, identified by the breadth, width, and durability of their appeal, are our best barometers of the artistic value of works of art generally. But if artistic value is centrally understood in terms of potential to afford intrinsically rewarding experience, then the fact that a given work is preferred to another work, all things considered, by a consensus of ideal critics gives a nonideal perceiver, one content in his appreciation of the second work, which he prefers to the first, a reason, if not a conclusive one, to pursue the first instead, putting himself if possible in a position to adequately appreciate it.

So why care what is artistically good, understood as what ideal critics prefer and recommend? The answer is that there is reason to believe that what ideal critics, so understood, approve is capable of giving a satisfaction that is *ultimately more worth having* than what one gets from what one enjoys as a nonideal appreciator. And that is because of a criterial connection to great works through which individuals are recognized as ideal critics, and the implications of the preference of those who are capable of experiencing both kinds of satisfaction, that afforded by incontestably great works of art and that afforded by works that just happen to please one in some measure in virtue of one's particular background, makeup, or history.

Ideal critics are the best suited to judging the potential of such works because their artistic tastes and appreciative habits have been honed on and formed by uncontested masterworks, whose robustly standing the test of time is good, if defeasible, evidence of their unusual aesthetic potential. Ideal critics are thus reliable indicators of artistic value in works of art generally, including those that have not yet stood the test of time.

The overall picture, then, is this. Great works are ones that stand the test of time, understood in terms of durability, breadth, and depth of appeal. Ideal critics, those with the sort of appreciative profile that makes them optimal enjoyers, appreciators, and explainers of great works, are thus best suited to estimating works of art generally, that is, assessing their aesthetic rewards against the benchmark provided by the greatest works in any genre, and so our best guides to enhancement of our own aesthetic lives where art is concerned.

iv. Before moving on to the main business of this essay, I note two doubts one might harbor as to whether ideal critics as I have characterized them are in fact apt guides to what is of worth in the artistic domain taken as a whole.

The first doubt is this. Are ideal critics, given their refined sensibilities, appreciative habits, and specialist preferences, really well placed to judge the comparative merits of mid-range, merely good artworks, ones far from the masterworks that such critics rightly hold in highest esteem?

The second doubt is this. Might not an ideal critic apt for identifying and judging of artistic quality in a given art form or genre be incapable, or less capable, of identifying and judging of such quality in other art forms or genres, ones quite removed from those in which he or she displays clear competence? And, if so, how can such an ideal critic make comparative judgments of artistic value across all art forms and genres, so as to serve the action-guiding purpose that such critics are charged with fulfilling?

To the first doubt I reply as follows. The fact that ideal critics consort by choice with works of outstanding rather than average quality and that they consequently spend more of their time examining and elucidating the former than the latter hardly suggests that they are less capable of making distinctions and discriminations in that middle area. It is as if one were to say that an astronomer, because he devotes many of his hours to studying faraway immense objects, such as stars and quasars, is thus likely to be less capable of telling which of two apples before him is the larger and by how much. But even if such critics were in fact less able to make discriminations in the artistic mid-range, that would not affect their serving as beacons toward what was artistically

best, and it is only that which is relevant to the following discussion.

To the second doubt I reply as follows. Making comparisons of action-guiding force across art forms and genres does require, it is true, more than a run-of-the-mill or *restricted* ideal critic, one only able to make quality discriminations in a given genre or art form. It rather requires what one can call a *comprehensive* ideal critic. But even though the notion of such a critic is clearly an idealization, there is no reason why it should not be realized, at least to a large extent, in actual individuals. That serious involvement in and appreciation of a given mode of artistic expression invariably or even necessarily precludes comparable involvement in and appreciation of other such modes, significantly removed from the given one in form and content, seems just an unsupported shibboleth of aesthetic defeatism, one that underestimates our capacities to make ourselves receptive to works of art, in whatever mode, that we have reason to believe have something to offer us.

The image of a comprehensive ideal critic is thus not that of the insular audio or video store clerk well versed in, say, progressive rock or Latin American cinema, regarding other music or film as without interest and beneath contempt, but rather that of someone who is at home with many forms of artistic creativity, who welcomes such diversity of the artistic imagination, and who recognizes that artistic worth can be achieved in many different ways. Such a critic, then, will in principle be able to make comparative judgments across genres and art forms, by comparing the rewards afforded by the different modes of art that he or she is capable of fully appreciating.

II. The Paradox of Aesthetic Perfectionism

i. I now turn to an ostensible conflict between, on the one hand, the preservation of one's personal taste for its own sake and, on the other hand, the improvement of one's taste under the guidance of informed criticism, that which ideal critics can be assumed to provide.²

One's taste, in the sense of personal preferences in matters aesthetic, arguably not only partly *reveals* who one is or what sort of person one is, but also partly *constitutes* who one is or

what sort of person one is. Let us term the totality of such aesthetic preferences an *aesthetic personality*. It seems fair to say that one's aesthetic personality is a proper part of who one is and of what defines and distinguishes one as an individual. As such, it is something that contributes to one's integrity and enters into one's identity, in the familiar loose, if not metaphysically strict, sense of the term. And the largest, arguably most important, part of an aesthetic personality would seem to consist in preferences among what is available for experience within the artistic domain.³

But now suppose, as I have tried to show, that one has an interest, a compelling personal interest, in pursuing works favored by ideal critics, especially ones who are comprehensively ideal and thus track, appreciate, and prefer the artistically better in all artistic domains, and in striving to become familiar with and capable of appreciating the works favored by such critics, so as to end up both preferring them to, and finding them more satisfying than, others of their sort. Grant, in other words, that one has an interest in modifying one's aesthetic capacities and preferences in the direction of optimality—an interest, we might say, in *perfecting* one's taste. And suppose that one wholly succeeds in this, and so now has optimal taste in matters artistic, and thus lives a life in that respect that is as rewarding as can be.

This has a curious upshot. It seems that one will have become indiscernible from a comprehensive ideal critic, as each such ideal critic is effectively indiscernible from any other. But if so, then what has become of one's aesthetic personality, or at least that part of it which consists in one's artistic preferences, which we have assumed to be an important component in one's individuality? It will appear to have been lost. But this must surely give us pause as to whether the attainment of perfection as an appreciator of things artistic, through a progressive approach to the condition and disposition of a comprehensive ideal critic, is really that desirable after all.

And now suppose further that everyone, recognizing that it is in his or her interest to seek out and be capable of properly experiencing what is artistically superior, manages to wholly transcend his or her original artistic tastes and become an ideal appreciator. Evidently, the problem of loss of individuality would then be even more acute,

because universal. If everyone truly liked and preferred what was superior as regards art, we would all have the same artistic taste, and thus the same aesthetic personalities with respect to art. Yet we all assume that part of what makes us the individuals we are is our distinctive aesthetic preferences, most notably, our preferences in the realm of art.

And yet is it not in one's rational interest, as urged in the first part of this essay, to aspire to the condition of an optimal appreciator who takes satisfaction in and prefers what is in fact artistically better? To not have one's taste aligned, as far as possible, with what is objectively and demonstratively better, where such an idea of betterness has purchase, as it arguably does in the arts, if not in the domain of sorbet flavors or wall colors, would be like having one's own distinctive set of beliefs, what one might label one's *epistemic personality*, but one that was only very imperfectly correlated with what is objectively and demonstratively true. Such an epistemic personality, however individualizing it might be, would not appear to be desirable in itself. For as we advance cognitively, and our beliefs thus conform more and more to what is true, we give up our epistemic personalities in that sense with no regrets. By contrast, as our artistic preferences align more and more with what is truly superior in that sphere, it seems that though we gain in accessing appreciative experiences of greater value, we lose in being led to progressively relinquish or diminish our aesthetic personalities and the individualization that they importantly ensure.

So this, in short, is the paradox of *aesthetic perfectionism*: we have a strong reason to improve ourselves as aesthetic appreciators, but we have as well, it seems, a strong reason not to give up our individual aesthetic selves.

ii. Of course, it is not as if all those who perfect their tastes along the lines I sketch would then behave in lockstep as regards artistic matters. If we all perfect our tastes in this manner, that means only that we will all prefer the same works and will choose them over others in the same practical conditions of appreciation. And that is an important qualification. For even an ideal appreciator does not always have enough time, money, energy, or mental alertness to properly appreciate, say, a Shakespeare tragedy or Wagner

opera, and so will not in fact always choose such offerings, even if they are ideally preferred to all other forms of theater. There are all sorts of contingencies of availability, of competing interests, of required duties—in short, myriad other aspects of our life situations—that guarantee that the actual appreciative behaviors of ideal appreciators will diverge. Thus, given five such ideal appreciators, then while A is listening, say, to Vivaldi at home, B is listening to Bjork in concert, C is contemplating Corots in the Louvre, D is in bed absorbed in Anita Brookner's latest novel, and E, who has had a hard day at the office, is allowing herself an episode or two of *Seinfeld* or *Sex and the City*. So we need have no worry that our appreciative behaviors would converge even if our tastes were perfected. Still, from the point of view of our perfected aesthetic behavioral dispositions, if not our actual appreciative activity, we will appear to have become perilously clone-like with respect to one another. And that seems enough for the paradox to take hold.

It might further be observed that although I clearly have *some* interest in moving in the direction of optimality in artistic appreciation if I am at a significant remove from it, it is not so clear that I have an interest in moving *all the way*, and for at least two reasons. One reason is that an attitude of *satisficing*, or resting with good enough options, may not always be irrational.⁴ A second reason is that persisting attachment to and preference for artworks that one has already established an appreciative relationship with is not obviously more irrational than attachment to and preference for friends to whom one is related most often by happenstance, and who may not in the abstract be optimal in the friendship benefits they afford.⁵

These are fair points, and were I to credit them fully they would remove much of the bite of the paradox I have erected. But I do not think they should be fully credited, for the following reasons. In relation to the second point, this is because of significant differences between our relations to persons and our relations to works of art, differences in the obligations and opportunities involved in the two cases. In relation to the first point, this is because of significant differences between contexts where satisficing makes most sense, ones involving choices between concrete options in temporally constrained

circumstances, and the context of ideal conditional preferences arrived at in a temporally unconstrained manner. Though there is, no doubt, more to say on both these scores, that must wait for another occasion.

iii. A first, obvious response to our paradox might be to point out that, although once enlightened by comprehensive ideal critics we may all *strive* to attain the condition of optimal appreciators, we will, as a matter of fact, always *fail* to do so, in one way or another, to one degree or another, if only for lack of time and energy to attain such a condition. Remnants of our original, individualizing tastes in a given art form are bound to remain with us, thus serving to anchor our distinctness as aesthetic agents.

Though true enough, this is not a wholly satisfying response. For it is still disconcerting to think that the universal attainment of perfection in artistic taste, even if it will clearly never occur, would have this undesirable consequence. Put otherwise, on this response to the paradox, the avoidance of the undesirable consequence is attributed simply to our inevitable failings as appreciators. But this sounds an odd note, since the overcoming of failings is ordinarily something to be welcomed.

Nor can the paradox be dispelled, I think, by insisting that one can change one's tastes for the better, attuning them more to what is artistically better, while still retaining one's original, imperfect, idiosyncratic, and so individualizing tastes. For *really* preferring aesthetically superior things means *no longer* preferring the aesthetically inferior things that you used to prefer, and which in part made you the distinctive person you were, even if they remain things that you are still able to appreciate and even derive substantial pleasure from.

There is an analogy between the resistance to attaining appreciative perfection that I have been highlighting and the attractions of irrationality as defended by the protagonist of Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from Underground*. As the Underground Man is at pains to emphasize, freedom and the individuality that freedom underwrites seem as important to us as any rationally calculable goods or utilities that present themselves for our consideration in deciding how to act on a given occasion. But in choosing to follow rationality, in

the name of clear-sighted self-interest, one risks becoming indistinguishable from others who also follow its dictates, since, given a set of conditions, there is generally only one, or at most a small number of, most rational or optimistic things to do. However, if one chooses to follow irrationality, at a stroke one's freedom and hence individuality are preserved, since there are an indefinite number of ways to be irrational, or to depart from ideal rationality, and one's own particular way of departing will invariably differ from anyone else's. Similarly, it looks as if declining to go all the way toward perfection as an appreciator of art might be justified in the name of this same value, the maintenance of one's distinct individuality in aesthetic matters.

iv. This is a good place to observe, before continuing, that there are arguably *two* senses of individuality as regards aesthetic personality, only one of which has so far been acknowledged. And that is individuality in the sense of *distinctiveness*, that by which one is or can be *differentiated* from others in respect of aesthetic choices among works of art. But a second, so far neglected, sense of 'individuality' is individuality in the sense of *authenticity*, that is, achieving or developing one's aesthetic personality, whether distinctive or not, *on one's own*, and not, say, as a ready-made profile adopted from others or from the surrounding culture. One's aesthetic personality, if authentic, is something that one has, as it were, *earned* or *crafted*. Now authenticity in aesthetic personality is indeed valuable, relating to virtues such as independence of mind, effort, and truth to self. But I would insist that distinctiveness in aesthetic personality is valuable as well, for reasons suggested in the article, such as our not wanting to live in a world of aesthetic clones, however authentically they may all have ended up that way.

It is worth noting as well that the *moral* case is substantially disanalogous to the aesthetic case on the issue which occupies us. If everyone achieved moral perfection, and thus was always inclined to do what is morally most worthy or admirable, then that, it seems, would be perfectly fine, since moral inclinations should ideally be universally shared. Let us say that morality, very roughly, concerns itself with how we ought to act in regard to one another so to further the good

while respecting one another fully as persons. As such, morality, unlike aesthetics, does not appear to be a field for expressing one's individuality. For total convergence on moral principles and resultant behaviors would not be something to be bemoaned, but rather something earnestly to be wished. The goal of morality, in short, is coordination, not differentiation. By contrast, total convergence in aesthetic preferences would seem to have the unfortunate consequence I have been underlining, namely, of apparently doing away with what distinguishes us as aesthetic agents and so diminishing our respective individualities.⁶

Now it is true that on a virtue-ethical, as opposed to a utilitarian or deontological, perspective on morality, moral action appears ineliminably to involve quasi-perceptual judgment rather than straightforward rule application, whereby specific situations are assessed as to what virtue requires, and where there may thus be different valid ways of gestalting a situation so as to arrive at a conviction of what it would be virtuous to do in it. Hence on a virtue-ethical perspective, there might thus be scope for individuality in realizing one's ethical self by acting virtuously, because of differing perceptual dispositions from one ethical agent to another. And even on a non-virtue-ethical, such as Kantian, perspective on morality, there will be situations allowing for discretionary choice among morally acceptable options—for instance, situations where a number of distinct acts are morally permissible or where there are a number of ways to realize an imperfect duty, such as that of charity or benevolence.

Nonetheless, whatever perspective on morality we favor, an asymmetry with aesthetics seems to remain, namely this: even if there are distinct valid answers to what it is right to do in a given situation that only quasi-perceptual assessment will inform us of, or a multiplicity of valid choices in a given situation from among permissible actions or ways to fulfill imperfect duties, such diverse realizations of what morality requires in concrete cases would be *acknowledged as legitimate*, but not, I think, *valued in themselves* as manifestations of the individuality of moral agents. The point of the moral enterprise, whatever theoretical perspective on morality we favor, would be to judge matters rightly and to act rightly in accord with such judgments, not to express our differing moral personalities. Or so it seems to me.

v. Let me then return to the paradox and suggest a second response to it. Were one to succeed in entirely perfecting one's taste in art, and so in becoming an optimal appreciator, it is true that the aesthetic preferences one would then have would not distinguish one from a comprehensive ideal critic. And were everyone to attain this state, which is admittedly extremely unlikely, they would not distinguish one from anyone at all in that respect.

But we have, so far, entirely overlooked the role of one's concrete *path* toward appreciative perfection, of the specific trajectory of one's aesthetic progress. For a person who *currently* prefers, in company with all ideal critics, all and only what is artistically best and ultimately most aesthetically rewarding is still inalterably the person who *formerly* preferred this and that work of lesser value, for whatever reasons were at play in his or her personal aesthetic development. Presumably the person also remembers that he was that person, presumably with a certain fondness one naturally feels for one's former self, presumably with a certain glad acceptance, for the most part, of the contingencies and vicissitudes that made him the particular individual he is. The point is that this personal aesthetic *history* is individualizing, even under the fantastic imagined assumption of one's having so perfected one's taste that what one prefers and most values artistically is just what any optimal appreciator prefers and most values.

To make this concrete, if we let Mozart, Charlie Parker, and the Beatles stand for summits of musical worth in three different genres, then though all optimal appreciators or ideal critics in the musical sphere recognize these as summits and ultimately prefer them, in ideal appreciative conditions, to other musics in their respective categories, one such appreciator or critic, call him Edgar, may have arrived at that state of appreciation via, say, an initial attraction to Boccherini, Tommy Dorsey, and Donovan, while another, call her Cheryl, arrived there via, say, an initial attraction to Rimsky-Korsakov, Dave Brubeck, and the Monkees. Though primary allegiance to those lesser musics has, by hypothesis, been transcended, it will not have been forgotten, and so Edgar will predictably retain something of a soft spot, or *faiblesse*, for the musics that figured in his personal journey toward aesthetic perfection and the same for Cheryl and the musics that figured in hers.

Such a *faiblesse* would in effect be a sort of trace left on a person's overall aesthetic disposition, yet not one that manifests itself in terms of the person's appreciative *preferences* or *choices*. For instance, if one was initially led to explore classical music through exposure to Liszt, a very good if perhaps not unquestionably great composer, then even after one's taste has been perfected and so, all things considered, one no longer prefers Liszt to, say, Brahms, one might yet be more inclined to defend the virtues of Liszt's music when under attack than the virtues of some similarly very good but not great composer who did not happen to figure among one's earliest affections, say, Bizet or Weber.

vi. Here is a third response to our little paradox, perhaps the one most worth putting weight on. What we have overlooked so far is that many artistic options are roughly *on a par* or possessed of a *roughly equal* artistic value.⁷ For instance, one might plausibly claim this of Mozart and Beethoven, John Coltrane and Charlie Parker, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, while insisting that none of, say, Tartini, Ludwig Spohr, Stanley Turrentine, or the Eagles are on a par with those. It thus remains open to us to express our aesthetic personalities, and hence our individualities, even were we to become perfect appreciators, through our distinct preferences and predilections among *more or less equally valuable* musical choices. One can, along with the most musically astute judges, value equally, for example, Haydn, Schubert, and Mahler, be equally gratified by them in listening, and yet be more drawn toward, more called by, one of those three, and so disposed to spend time with that composer more readily, or more often, than with the other two.

Put otherwise, the existence of objectively better and worse in artistic matters, and the aesthetic perfectionism that that may motivate, is compatible with a pluralism of taste as between works of great value in a given genre that are more or less on a plane. One's distinctive aesthetic personality could thus find adequate expression even were one to perfect one's taste by conforming one's taste, under the guidance of ideal critics, to what is objectively better, which I have suggested it is in fact in one's interest to do. As ideal appreciators we would, by hypothesis, all value the same works of art, and to the same extent. However, such

works do not arrange themselves in a strict linear series as to quality, but rather group themselves into loose equivalence classes, among which there can, happily, be a free preference. Thus, even as ideal appreciators of art, wholly attuned in our preferences to what is truly superior, we would acknowledge, say, that works in group A were better than works in group B, and so regularly prefer As to Bs, but that within group A it was legitimate to play favorites, so to speak, to let elective affinities hold sway, and thus to affirm our distinctive aesthetic personalities, however perfected.

vii. Lastly, a fourth response to our paradox, one that is in a sense the most obvious but which nevertheless serves in some measure to dampen its sting, is this. Even if we all, having perfected our artistic tastes, ended up with the same conditional aesthetic preferences, so that we made all the same artistic choices in all the same appreciative conditions, it will remain the case that we, as irreducibly distinct *appreciators*, with our own specific sensibilities, memories, and histories, will have different *responses*, on the small and large scale, to our commonly preferred works. That is to say, it will remain the case that we will have different resulting *aesthetic experiences* of the works that we, by hypothesis, jointly hold in the highest regard. If so, then our aesthetic individualities will be manifested, if not always observably, through those differing experiences, despite our wholly conformant aesthetic judgments and appreciative preferences. In other words, even if we were to become aesthetic doubles of each other in terms of our *outward* aesthetic choices among works of art, we would remain distinct from each other in terms of our *inward* aesthetic responses to those choices. And that would provide, if all else failed, so to speak, a ground of differentiation among us as aesthetic agents.

If I have made a mountain out of a molehill with the paradox highlighted in the main part of this essay, I have also, at any rate, shown how to reduce it again to manageable proportions. In summary, at least four observations help with that. First, appreciative perfection, even if a rational goal, is one we can be pretty confident that few will attain, and so the risk of actually outstripping all one's imperfect yet individualizing

artistic preferences seems small. Second, even were one to attain such perfection, one would remain the person who arrived at that optimal appreciative condition by a particular trajectory, a trajectory that leaves a mark on one's overall aesthetic disposition, even if no longer something that concretely influences one's appreciative choices. Third, even assuming the universal attainment of appreciative perfection, one's individualizing personal taste would still have a field of exercise in the concrete preference among works of the highest order that are roughly on a par with respect to artistic value. And fourth, even were we all disposed to choose the same works in the same conditions of choice, we would invariably respond to those works in distinct ways, thus underlining once again our aesthetic individualities.⁸

Notes

- 1 See my "Hume's 'Standard of Taste': The Real Problem," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002): 227–238, as well as a subsequent response to criticism, "The Real Problem Sustained: Reply to Wieand," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 61 (2003): 398–399.
- 2 I note that Alexander Nehamas, in *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (Princeton University Press, 2007), has explored the tension that I am about to address, though his perspective on the issues involved differs importantly from mine. Nehamas notes the universal aspiration involved in judgments of beauty, something central to Kant's analysis of such judgments: "[W]henever I find something beautiful, even when I speak only to myself, my judgment goes outward: I expect that others should join me, or would join me if they only had the opportunity, and make that beautiful thing part of their own lives as well" (p. 78). But Nehamas holds the prospect of in principle complete convergence on judgments of beauty—or more broadly, artistic worth—to be a chimera, and such convergence something to be abhorred rather than regretted: "Kantianism ... dreams of a world where aesthetic difference has been eliminated. ... [I]deally, everyone would accept every correct judgment: in a perfect world, we would all find beauty in the very same places. ... But that dream is a nightmare" (p. 83). And that is so because of the threat such convergence poses to our individualities, given that "character and style are an essential

part of what distinguishes a person from the rest of the world" (p. 86). Where I depart from Nehamas is in regarding the tension between the two values in play, artistic worth and aesthetic individuality, as being rather more acute than he does, since I am unwilling to view the former as ultimately personal and parochial, whereas it seems that he is: "[N]o community I hope to create around something I find beautiful is ever a universal community" (p. 82).

- 3 It is not the whole, clearly enough, since aesthetic preferences in clothing, cars, furniture, kitchenware, hairstyle, and the like surely also figure in aesthetic personality broadly understood.
- 4 For an insightful discussion of conditions where this appears to be so, see Patricia Greenspan, "Resting Content: Sensible Satisficing?" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 46 (2009): 305–317.
- 5 This is a main theme in Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness*, chap. 2.
- 6 Nehamas has underlined this difference between the moral and the aesthetic realms with characteristic eloquence: "The values of morality bind us to one another. They move us to expand the

circle of our concern as widely as we possibly can and, for that reason, both exploit and generate similarities among us. Aesthetic values have a narrower domain. ... While the values of morality are the emblems of our commonalities, the values of aesthetics are the badges of our particularities" (*Only a Promise of Happiness*, p. 86).

- 7 The idea that works of art may often be on a par in terms of artistic value, and irreducibly so, is sensitively discussed in section XIV of Malcolm Budd, "The Intersubjective Validity of Aesthetic Judgments," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 47 (2007): 333–371.
- 8 For helpful comments on the issues of this article, I thank colleagues, respondents, and audiences on the following occasions: American Society for Aesthetics Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, October 2007; Workshop on Values, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, September 2008; and Workshop on Taste, NYU–Abu Dhabi Institute, Abu Dhabi, January 2010. My thanks especially to Paul Boghossian, Carol Gould, Paisley Livingston, Alex Neill, Peter Railton, Nicholas Riggle, Michael Smith, David Velleman, and Susan Wolf.

Style and Personality in the Literary Work

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Introduction

In this paper I want to describe and defend a certain conception of literary style. If we look at literary style in the way I shall suggest, it will explain many of the problems that surround this elusive concept such as why something can be an element of style in the work of one author and not in another, what the difference is between individual style and general style, and how style differs from “signature.” The ordinary conception of style is that it consists of nothing but a set of verbal elements such as a certain kind of vocabulary, imagery, sentence structure and so on. On my conception, however, a literary style is rather a way of *doing* certain things, such as describing characters, commenting on the action and manipulating the plot. I shall claim that an author’s way of doing these things is an expression of her personality, or, more accurately, of the personality she seems to have. The verbal elements of style gain their stylistic significance by contributing to the expression of this personality, and they cannot be identified as *stylistic* elements independently of the personality they help to express.

Jenefer Robinson, “Style and Personality in the Literary Work” in *The Philosophical Review* 94(2), 1985, pp. 227–247. Reproduced with permission of Duke University Press.

Many theorists and critics have written as if style were an expression of personality. A good recent example is an essay on the first paragraph of Henry James’ novel *The Ambassadors*, in which the writer, Ian Watt, claims that

the most obvious and demonstrable features of James’ prose style, its vocabulary and syntax, are direct reflections of his attitude to life and his conception of the novel . . .¹

Watt lists some of the most notable elements in James’ style: the preference for “non-transitive” verbs, the widespread use of abstract nouns, the prevalence of the word “that,” the presence of “elegant variation” in the way in which something is referred to, and the predominance of negatives and near-negatives. Then Watt proceeds to show how these stylistic elements are expressive of James’ *interest* in the abstract, his *preoccupation* with what is going on in the consciousness of his characters and his *attitude* of humorous compassion for them.

This essay is an attempt to explain and justify the assumption of Watt and others like him that style is essentially an expression of qualities of mind, attitudes, interests and personality traits which appear to be the author’s own. My thesis is a thesis about what Richard Wollheim calls

"individual style" and not about the style of periods or of groups of writers within a period.² I do not want to suggest that the unity of period or group styles, such as the Augustan style, can be explained in terms of the "personality" of a group or period. One other point should be mentioned. I believe that my remarks apply equally well to the non-literary arts, but for reasons of space I shall not attempt to justify this claim here.

I Style as the Expression of Personality

In this first section I shall argue that style is essentially a way of doing something and that it is expressive of personality. Further, I shall suggest that what count as the verbal elements of style are precisely those elements which contribute to the expression of personality.

Intuitively, my style of dress, work, speech, decision-making and so on is the mode or manner or way in which I dress, work, speak and make decisions. In short it is the way I *do* these things. In ordinary contexts, then, a style is always a way of *doing* something. No less intuitively, my style of dressing, working, speaking and making decisions is typically an *expression* of (some features of) my personality, character, mind or sensibility. Thus my vulgar way of dressing is likely to be an expression of my vulgar sensibility, my witty, intellectual way of speaking an expression of my witty, intellectual mind, and my uncompromisingly courageous way of making decisions an expression of my uncompromisingly courageous character.

In saying that a person's way of doing things is an *expression* of that person's traits of mind, character or personality, I am saying (1) that the person's way of doing things exhibits or manifests these traits, and (2) that it is these traits which cause the person to do things in the way they do. Thus these traits leave a matching imprint or trace upon the actions which express them. If my timid way of behaving at parties is an expression of my timid character, then (1) my behavior exhibits or manifests timidity – I behave in a manifestly timid fashion, blushing, refusing to talk to strangers, hiding in the washrooms, etc. – and (2) my timid behavior is caused by my timid character, i.e., it is not due to the fact that

(say) I am pretending to be timid, imitating a timid person or acting the part of a timid person in a play, nor is it the result of secret arrogance and contempt for parties. In general, if a person's actions are an expression of her personality, then those actions have the character that they have – compassionate, timid, courageous or whatever – in virtue of the fact that they are caused by the corresponding trait of mind or character in that person, compassion, timidity or courage. In expression, as the word itself suggests, an "inner" state is expressed or forced out into "outer" behavior. An "inner" quality of mind, character or personality causes the "outer" behavior to be the way it is, and also leaves its "trace" upon that behavior. A timid or compassionate character leaves a "trace" of timidity or compassion upon the actions which express it.³

Just as a person's style of dressing, working and speaking is the mode or manner or way in which she dresses, works and speaks, so an author's style of description, character delineation and treatment of a theme is the mode or manner or way in which she describes things, delineates character and treats her theme. In other words, it is her way of *doing* certain things, such as describing or characterizing a setting, delineating character, treating or presenting a theme, and commenting on the action. Moreover, the writer's way of describing, delineating, commenting and so on is typically an *expression* of (some features of) her personality, character, mind or sensibility. Thus James' humorous yet compassionate way of describing Strether's bewilderment expresses the writer's own humorous yet compassionate attitude. Jane Austen's ironic way of describing social pretension expresses her ironic attitude to social pretension.

Now, a style is not simply a way of doing something. We do not say that a person has a *style* of doing so-and-so unless that person does so-and-so in a relatively consistent fashion. Thus we say I have a vulgar and flamboyant *style* of dressing only if I consistently dress in a vulgar and flamboyant way. It may be, of course, that my way of dressing differs considerably from one day to the next: yesterday I wore a purple silk pyjama suit, today I am wearing a frilly scarlet mini-dress and tomorrow it will be leather dungarees and a transparent blouse. Despite these differences, however, we still say that I have a consistent way

of dressing, because all my outfits are consistently vulgar and flamboyant. Moreover, my style of dressing is expressive of a particular feature of my personality, namely vulgarity and flamboyance. In an exactly similar way, we say that Jane Austen has a *style* of describing social pretension, because she consistently describes social pretension in an *ironic* way and the way she describes social pretension is expressive of a particular feature of her outlook, namely her irony.

So far I have talked only about a person's style of doing a particular thing, such as dressing. By contrast, when we say that a person has "a style," we normally mean that he or she has the same style of doing a number of different things. Thus when we accuse John of having a vulgar and flamboyant style, we may be referring to the vulgar and flamboyant way in which John not only dresses but also talks and entertains his dinner guests. Again, in characterizing Mary's style as generous, open, casual and easy-going, we may mean that Mary is generous, open, casual and easy-going in almost everything that she does. In this case Mary's style is expressive not of a single trait but of a number of traits which together 'sum up' Mary's personality.

In just the same way, a person's literary style is their style of performing a wide range of (literary) activities. Thus, clearly, Jane Austen's style is not simply her style of doing any one thing, such as describing social pretension, but rather her style of doing a number of things, such as *describing*, *portraying* and *treating* her characters, theme and social setting, *commenting* on the action, *presenting* various points of view, and so on. In short, to borrow a concept from Guy Sircello, it is the way in which she performs the various "artistic acts"⁴ which constitute the writing of a literary work. Now, a style of doing a wide range of things is just like a style of doing a particular thing in that it consistently expresses certain features of the mind, personality, etc., of the agent. We say that Mary has "a style" in virtue of the consistently generous, open, casual and easy-going way in which she does a number of different things. Similarly, a writer has a literary style in virtue of the fact that her style of performing a wide variety of artistic acts expresses the same qualities of (her) mind and temperament. For example, James' style of *treating* Strether, of *portraying* the difference between what Strether

thinks of Waymarsh and what he thinks he thinks, of *emphasizing* the abstract and the timeless, of *commenting* on Strether's bewilderment and so on together constitute what we call "James' style." And this style owes its coherence to the fact that all these artistic acts express the same set of attitudes, interests and qualities of mind.

Of course, not every artistic act of a writer in a particular work expresses exactly the same qualities of mind, character or personality. In *Emma*, for example, Jane Austen portrays Mrs. Elton in a quite different way from Jane Fairfax. This is because Jane Austen's attitude to Mrs. Elton is quite different from her attitude to Jane Fairfax. In the one portrayal she expresses (among other things) her love of the ridiculous, and in the other she expresses (among other things) her compassion for suffering sensibility. But Jane Austen's way of portraying Mrs. Elton and her way of portraying Jane Fairfax, as well as her way of portraying the other characters in the novel, her way of describing their personal relationships, her way of developing the plot, and all the other innumerable artistic acts which go into writing the novel *Emma* together add up to the style in which *Emma* is written, a style which expresses all those attitudes that together form the personality of the author of *Emma*.

If a writer has an individual style, then the way she writes has a certain consistency: the same traits of mind, character and personality are expressed throughout her work. Now, at a particular point in a novel, the writer may seem to express anxiety about, anger at or contempt towards a particular character, event or idea, although the writer does not seem to be a chronically anxious, angry or contemptuous sort of person. However, such "occasional" properties should not be thought of as properties of style. Only those properties which are "standing" or long-term properties can be considered stylistic. Thus stylistic qualities are likely to be qualities of mind, moral qualities and deep-seated character traits, rather than mood or emotional qualities such as "angry," "joyful," and "afraid." In the same way, we do not treat every angry, joyful or fearful action performed in real life as an expression of basic character or personality; it is only when someone consistently acts in a choleric or a cheerful way, that we infer to her essentially choleric or cheerful nature.

I have argued that a literary style is a way of performing "artistic acts," describing a setting, portraying character, manipulating plot and so on, and it is the writer's way of performing these acts which is expressive of all those standing traits, attitudes, qualities of mind and so on that together form her personality. What, then, is the relation between the performance of these acts and what have traditionally been thought of as the verbal elements of style, such as a certain vocabulary, imagery and sentence structure? When a writer describes a setting and portrays character, she uses words, and the kind of word she uses, the sort of sentence structure she forms and so on together constitute the elements of verbal style. If a writer manipulates his theme from the point of view of one whose main interest is in thought and the development of consciousness (James) or if she portrays her characters with a judicious mixture of irony and compassion (Austen), then he or she does so by using language in certain ways.

Obviously the presence of certain verbal elements does not *entail* that a particular personality is being expressed.⁵ If, however, (on a reasonable interpretation) those verbal elements are being used by a writer to perform artistic acts in a particular way, then we can infer from the way the acts are performed to characteristics of the writer's mind, character and personality. For example, Henry James uses negatives, abstract nouns, etc., in order to describe Strether's state of consciousness, to comment on Strether's bewilderment and to characterize Strether's attitude to Waymarsh, and he thereby expresses qualities of his own mind and personality.

Moreover, negatives, abstract nouns, non-transitive verbs, elegant variation and so on are verbal elements which at first sight seem to have nothing in common. What links them all together, however, as elements of "James' style" is their use in the artistic acts James performs: they are all elements of his style because they all contribute to the expression of his personality and attitudes. For example, using these particular verbal elements, James thereby describes Strether's state of consciousness in a particular judicious, abstractive, expository way and thereby expresses his own "subjective and abstractive tendency,"⁶ his interest in the relations between minds (Strether's, the narrator's,

the reader's), his moral sensitivity and his cool and judicious intellect.

II The Personality of the Implied Author

So far in this essay I have written as if the personality expressed by the style of a work were that of the writer herself. I have suggested that we infer from the way in which the writer performs the artistic acts in a work to the presence of personality traits and so on *in the writer* which cause her to perform those acts in the way that she does. But this is an oversimplification. What is more typically expressed by the style of a work is not the personality of the actual author, but of what, following Wayne Booth, we might call the "implied author,"⁷ that is, the author as she seems to be from the evidence of the work. Thus however querulous and intolerant the actual Tolstoy may have been in real life, the implied author of *Anna Karenina* is full of compassionate understanding.

Because the way in which people act typically expresses features of their minds, attitudes and personalities, we are justified in making inferences from the way in which people perform actions to the presence in them of certain character or personality traits. If we see Mary constantly acting in a generous and compassionate way, then, barring any evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to infer that Mary has a generous and compassionate nature which is responsible for her generous and compassionate actions.⁸ The situation is more complicated, however, when we are considering acts performed by an author in the composition of a literary work. Although it may sometimes be legitimate to infer from the way these acts are performed to personality traits in the actual author, it is normally the case that the personality expressed by the style of a literary work is not that of the actual author but that of the implied author.

This might sound as if the author were trying to mislead us. After all if in real life it turns out that Mary's generous and compassionate actions are entirely due to her desire to impress John, then we might well accuse her of deceiving us – or at least John – about her true nature. She seems to be a generous and compassionate person but in fact is not. However, the situation is

significantly different in the literary case. It is, after all, a commonplace convention of fiction-writing that the author more or less consciously "puts on" or "adopts" a persona to tell "her" story, but normally at any rate the author is not thereby trying to deceive us into believing that this assumed persona or personality is her own.⁹ When we make inferences from the way the artistic acts in a work are performed to the personality of this implied author, the "person" who seems to be performing these acts, we are aware that the personality which leaves its "trace" on the way those acts are performed is a personality created and adopted by the author and which may be different from that of the author herself.¹⁰ Thus, as Booth points out, even the implied author of *Emma* does not have all her qualities in common with the real Jane Austen. Both are wise, witty, unsentimental and so on, but the implied author of *Emma* has a moral perfection beyond the scope of the real Jane Austen.¹¹

Some literary works deliberately exploit a number of different styles. A good example is James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In this case the style of at least some of the different episodes of the book should be identified with the style not of the implied author "James Joyce" but of the narrator of that episode. The personality expressed by the style of the Cyclops episode, for example, is not the personality which the author seems to have; the coarse and unpleasant personality expressed belongs only to the nameless narrator of the episode. Notice, however, that this kind of case is parasitic upon the normal case: it is because a style is normally an expression of the personality of the writer that we infer from the style of the Cyclops episode to the presence of a coarse and unpleasant person writing or narrating it.¹²

Does it make sense to talk about "the style" of *Ulysses*? In a way it does not, because *Ulysses* contains so many different styles (some of which are not even "individual" styles).¹³ Nevertheless, we can identify an implied author of *Ulysses* and detect the way in which he appears to *manipulate* the narrative point of view, *treat* the *Ulysses* theme, *characterize* Molly Bloom, etc. The way these artistic acts are performed is part of *the style of Ulysses*. For example, the presence of many different narrators with different styles is itself a feature of *Joyce's* style and it is expressive of certain traits that Joyce seems to have, such as a

boisterous creativity, a delight in the expressive capacities of language and an interest in the way reality can be viewed and reported from so many different points of view.¹⁴

One of the ways in which we identify "Joyce's style" is by looking at Joyce's oeuvre as a whole. Thus we may be inclined to see the style of the early Stephen episodes in *Ulysses* (as opposed to, say, the Cyclops episode) as in "Joyce's style" partly because they are in somewhat the same style as other works by Joyce, notably *A Portrait of the Artist*. The style of an oeuvre, just like the style of an individual work, is an expression of the personality of the implied author of that oeuvre. Just as we sometimes find a variety of styles in a single work (like *Ulysses*), so it is possible to find in a single oeuvre a variety of styles corresponding to radically different implied authors. But in the normal case the implied author of different works in a single oeuvre is recognizably the "same person." Of course no two works do or even can express exactly the same personality, but there will normally be striking similarities. Typically, the personality expressed by an author's style matures over time. Thus the implied author of Jane Austen's books becomes less acerbic in her wit, more compassionate and tender;¹⁵ the implied author of Henry James' works becomes ever more complex, subtle and abstract in his thinking and moralizing. A style grows and matures with the personality it expresses.

III An Objection Considered

My thesis has been that the defining feature of a literary work which has an individual style is that the work is an expression of the personality of the implied author,¹⁶ and that what links the diverse verbal elements of style together into a coherent whole is that they all contribute to the expression of this particular personality. One objection to this thesis is that there are many qualities of a work which *prima facie* are qualities of its style but which do not seem to express any qualities of mind or personality in the implied author. In particular, there are formal qualities (euphonic, Latinate, colloquial, ornate) and expressive qualities (dramatic, heroic, violent) which may be attributed to the style of a work but which are

not (or need not be) qualities of the implied author's mind or personality.

In this section of the paper I shall argue that such formal and expressive qualities are not always qualities of the individual style of a work, and that when they are it is only because they contribute to the expression of qualities of mind, personality, etc. in the implied author. Among works which possess striking formal or expressive qualities (euphony, violence, etc.), I distinguish three sorts of case: (1) works which have such properties but lack style altogether, (2) works which have such properties and also belong to a general style category but which lack individual style, and (3) works which have such properties and which also possess individual style.

(1) Intuitively, there could be a piece of characterless prose which nevertheless happens to be *euphonious*, i.e., the words it contains make a pleasing musical sound. Imagine, for example, an incompetent Freshman English paper in which the ideas are unclearly expressed, the sentence structure confused and the choice of words unimaginative. No one reading the paper would attribute to it an individual style. Yet, quite by chance, the ill-chosen words are euphonious: l's, m's and n's predominate, there are only a few plosives or fricatives, and the vowel sounds fit together in a melodious way. To say that this work is in a "euphonious style," however, is at best misleading, since intuitively it is not in a style at all. The possession of just one striking formal quality, such as euphony, is not normally sufficient to endow a work with style. Indeed even a string of nonsense syllables may be euphonious, although presumably they cannot be in a style. Hence euphony does not always contribute to individual style, just because it may be a quality of a work that lacks style altogether. On my view, of course, a euphonious work that lacks individual style is a euphonious work which fails to express any individual personality in the implied author.

(2) A more interesting situation arises when a work is in a "euphonious style" in the sense that it belongs to what Wollheim calls a "general" style category, although it does not possess *individual* style. General style categories, such as period or school styles, group together writers, painters or other artists who seem to the critic and historian to have important characteristics in

common, for example, the Elizabethan pastoral lyric style or the style of the school of Donne (the Metaphysical style). To belong to a general category of literary style often involves obeying certain conventions and using certain techniques. Thus the style of Elizabethan pastoral love lyrics demands a certain stylized way of referring to the lover and the beloved, of describing their surroundings and so on. The imagery and the poetic forms employed all fall within a fairly narrow and predictable range. More importantly for my present argument, membership in a particular general style category often requires a work to have certain formal and expressive qualities. Thus the style of an Elizabethan pastoral love lyric is supposed to be charming and euphonious, the Metaphysical style colloquial and dramatic, and the Miltonic epic style (i.e., the style of works which imitate *Paradise Lost*) Latinate and heroic.

Now, intuitively, there is a distinction between merely belonging to a general style category and having a formed individual style. For example, although a poem must be (somewhat) colloquial and (somewhat) dramatic in order to count as a Metaphysical poem at all, it does not follow that every minor lyric by Carew or Suckling has an individual style. Indeed we may often be hard-pressed to distinguish between the lesser works of Carew and Suckling, just because they do lack "individuality." Similarly, many of the poems in the collection *England's Helicon* obey all the requirements of the Elizabethan pastoral lyric style and yet remain "characterless." They are charming and euphonious but they have an anonymous air about them: they do not seem to have been written by anyone in particular. In short, a work which belongs to a general style category may have certain striking formal or expressive qualities even though it lacks individual style. An Elizabethan love lyric may be euphonious, a Metaphysical poem dramatic, a Miltonic epic Latinate without necessarily being in an individual style.

One of the merits of my theory of style is that it allows us to define and explain this intuitive distinction between individual and general style. On my view, the crucial difference is that whereas having an individual style necessarily involves the expression of personality in the implied author, belonging to a general style category has no such

implications. Elsewhere¹⁷ I have argued for this position in much greater detail than is either possible or appropriate here. If I am right, however, it follows that there can be works belonging to a general style category which possess the formal and expressive qualities characteristic of that style but which do not express any individual personality in the implied author. Hence these formal and expressive qualities, although qualities of general style, do not contribute to any individual style in the work just because they do not contribute to the expression of an individual personality in the implied author of the work.

(3) Finally, formal and expressive qualities such as "Latinate," "euphonious" and "dramatic" may be qualities that are present in works of individual style and which do contribute to the expression of personality in those works. It does not follow, however, that the implied author is a Latinate, euphonious or dramatic sort of fellow. These qualities in themselves do not express any particular trait in the implied author. Rather they can help to express many diverse traits, depending upon the artistic acts to which they contribute. In a similar way, Henry James' fondness for negatives does not in itself express any feature of "his" personality; it is the way the negatives are used in the performance of artistic acts, such as describing Strether's state of mind, which gives this feature of James' work its stylistic significance.

The quality of euphony, for example, may indeed contribute to individual style, but it does so by contributing to the expression of individual personality in a work. Consequently the contribution it makes is very different in different works. Both Swinburne's "Garden of Proserpine" and large passages of Milton's "Paradise Lost" can be described as euphonious, but the personalities expressed in the individual style of these two works are very different. In the Swinburne poem the gentle, musical sounds help to express the implied author's sense of world-weariness, melancholy and resignation,¹⁸ whereas the famous Miltonic melody generally serves to help express the implied author's sense of the dignity and grandeur of his theme. To say that both works are in a "euphonious style" means simply that euphony is a formal quality of both works, which in both cases contributes to individual style. The way it contributes, however, is quite different in

the two cases. Similarly it could be argued that both Jane Austen and Donne have *dramatic* styles, but clearly the dramatic qualities in each help to express quite different personalities and hence contribute quite differently to the styles of each.¹⁹

In summary then, the formal and expressive qualities I have been discussing are not always qualities of the individual style of a work: they may be present in works lacking any style at all or in works which belong to a general style category but do not have individual style. Moreover, even when such qualities contribute to the individual style of a work, they do so in very different ways. The 'same' quality in two different works may contribute to the expression of quite different traits of mind and personality in the implied authors of those works.

There are two interesting corollaries of my discussion. First, it would seem to follow that no verbal element or formal or expressive quality in a work is always and inevitably an element or quality of individual style. Even such qualities as "euphonious" and "Latinate" do not contribute to individual style wherever they appear, and even when they do contribute to individual style, they do so in virtue of how they are used in the artistic acts in the work. Secondly, it would also seem to follow that *any* verbal element or formal or expressive quality in a work *can* be an element or quality of individual style, provided it contributes in the appropriate way to the expression of personality in the implied author.

In short, if my thesis is correct, then there is no "taxonomy" or checklist of style elements, that is, elements which contribute to individual style wherever they appear.²⁰ Euphony, Latinate diction, and the presence of many negatives are elements of individual style only if they are used in such a way as to contribute to the expression of traits of mind and personality in the implied author.

We cannot, therefore, identify the elements of individual style merely as the most striking or salient features of a work. On the one hand there are striking features which do not invariably contribute to individual style. I have argued that euphony, for example, may be a striking feature of works which lack individual style. Again, it would be a striking feature of a work if all the proper names in it began with the letter

'X', yet intuitively this would not be a feature of its *style* (although it could be if, for example, it were used to express the implied author's sense of fun).

On the other hand, moreover, there are many elements which are not particularly salient but which contribute to individual style. Thus a certain writer who has a formed individual style may have a preference for the indefinite article over the definite which contributes in a small way to the expression of her generalizing imagination and tendency to abstraction. Again, any careful, sensitive reader of *The Ambassadors* can tell that James tends to "interpolate" elements in his sentences, but we may not notice that the interpolations typically occur between verb or adjective and complement, or between auxiliary and main verb, and that they cluster towards the center of a sentence.²¹ Yet it is non-salient elements such as these which contribute significantly to James' style, because they all help to express "James'" characteristic attitudes, interests and qualities of mind and personality.

IV Some Problems Resolved

I have argued that if a literary work has an individual style, the artistic acts in the work are performed in such a way as to express qualities of mind, attitudes, personality traits, etc., which make up the individual personality of the implied author of the work. The verbal elements of (individual) style are those elements which contribute to the expression of this personality. There is no "checklist" of elements or qualities which inherently or intrinsically contribute to individual style, no matter where they appear.

So far I have merely tried to make my thesis seem reasonable and to forestall some possible objections to it. In this final section I should like to make some more positive remarks in its favor. The best reason for accepting my theory is that it answers an array of difficult questions surrounding the concept of style.

(1) First, my theory explains why a correct description of a writer's style mentions some of its verbal characteristics but not others. On my view, what count as the elements of a style are precisely those verbal elements which contribute to the expression of the implied author's person-

ality. In Henry James, for example, the relevant verbal elements include the recurrent use of non-transitive verbs, abstract nouns, negatives and the word 'that'. These all help to contribute to the expression of "James'" personality. But we could, no doubt, if we searched for them, discover many recurrent elements in James' work which are not stylistically significant. Thus perhaps it would turn out that James had a penchant for nouns beginning with the letter 'f' or that his sentences invariably had an even number of words in them. A description of James' style would not mention these elements, however, precisely because they do not contribute to the expression of the personality of the implied author. In short, many quite diverse and seemingly unrelated verbal elements belong to the same style in virtue of the fact that they all contribute to the expression of the same personality. It is only if the frequent use of nouns beginning with the letter 'f' can be shown to contribute to this personality that this particular verbal characteristic would be an element of style.

(2) For similar reasons, my theory explains why it is that the same verbal element may have stylistic significance in one work or author and no stylistic significance, or a different significance, in another work or author. For the same stylistic element may play no expressive role in the one case and an important role in the other. Alternatively, it may simply play different expressive roles in the two cases. Suppose, for example, that two writers tend to use the indefinite article rather than the definite. In one writer, who has a formed individual style, this may contribute to the expression of her generalizing imagination and tendency to abstraction. In the other writer, it may be an accident and it may have no expressive effect in the work, or perhaps it indicates a lack of strength and precision in the style. In the first writer we have located the presence of a stylistic element; in the second writer the same element has no stylistic significance or a different one. If we were to view a person's style as consisting of a set of elements which we can check off on a checklist, then it would make no sense to say that a particular element is sometimes stylistic and sometimes not. But if we view style as a function of the literary personality expressed by a work in the way I have suggested, then the problem dissolves.

(3) It is commonly believed that if a writer or a work has an individual style, this implies that the various stylistic elements have a certain unity. Yet there are no intrinsic connections among the features of James' style, for example: why should negatives, abstract nouns and 'elegant variation' go together to form a unified style? My theory explains in a clear way what stylistic unity amounts to: a style has a unity because it is the expression of the personality of the implied author. Just as we see the way a person performs the various actions of daily life as expressive of different facets of her personality, so we see the way in which a writer seems to perform the various artistic acts in a literary work as expressive of different facets of "her" personality. The many disparate elements of verbal style fit together only because they are being used to express the "same" personality: the writer uses the elements of verbal style to describe her characters, treat her theme, etc., thereby seeming to reveal a set of personality traits, qualities of mind, attitudes and so forth which "makes sense" out of (unifies) this multitude of artistic acts.

The question arises as to whether this set of "standing" traits forms a coherent personality. The concept of a "unified" or coherent personality is admittedly somewhat vague, since the most disparate and apparently inconsistent psychological traits seem capable of coexisting in normal, rational people.²² All I need to insist on, however, is that if a work has an individual style then the different traits expressed by the various artistic acts in the work (portraying Jane Fairfax, characterizing Emma's treatment of her father, etc.) coexist in a way which is consistent with our knowledge of persons and human nature. Moreover, the same traits must be consistently expressed throughout a work. Thus the implied author of *Le Rouge et le Noir* both admires and despises the aristocratic world to which Julien Sorel aspires, but because he does so consistently and because the conflict in his attitudes is one which we recognize as possible in a basically rational person, his admiration and scorn are both part of the personality expressed by the style of the work.²³ If however, a work expresses no individual personality at all or if the personality expressed is a confusion of different traits which do not fit together in an intelligible way, then it

follows from my thesis that the work in question lacks individual style.²⁴

(4) It used to be a commonplace of literary theory that the subject-matter of a text is *what* the writer writes about, whereas the style is *how* she writes about it. This distinction has recently been questioned by several writers, including Nelson Goodman who argues that

some differences in style consist entirely of differences in what is said. Suppose one historian writes in terms of military conflicts, another in terms of social changes; or suppose one biographer stresses public careers, another personalities.²⁵

The theory of style which I have outlined in this essay accounts for the intuition that sometimes features of subject-matter may be stylistic features and explains which features of subject-matter will count as stylistic and why. Briefly, a feature of subject-matter is of stylistic relevance just in case it is expressive of the implied author's personality. Thus it is reasonable to construe the subject-matter of *The Ambassadors* as the development of Strether's consciousness. In this case the choice of subject-matter is clearly of stylistic relevance. Again the differences in the histories and biographies envisioned by Goodman are clearly differences in the personalities of the implied authors of these works.

(5) My theory also has a satisfying explanation for the difference between what Goodman calls "style" and "signature." A "signature" is anything which identifies a work as being by a particular author, school, or whatever, such as an actual signature. A "signature," however, may have no stylistic significance. Goodman says:

Although a style is metaphorically a signature, a literal signature is no feature of style.²⁶

It is true that a style, like a "signature," may *identify* a work or an author, but the way it performs the identification is quite different. A "signature" may have nothing to do with the qualities of the implied author expressed by a work. Perhaps it is an actual signature or perhaps some other convention is used: a writer might be uniquely identifiable by the particular Latin tag which appears at the head of all her books, regardless of their

subject-matter or style (if any). A style, on the other hand, identifies a work or an author because it is an expression of a set of attitudes, qualities of mind, character traits and so on which are unique to the implied author of that work or oeuvre.

(6) Finally, as I have already remarked, one of the virtues of my theory is that it allows me to clarify the distinction between general and individual style.²⁷ If a work belongs to a general style category, then, although it may have formal and expressive qualities that are distinctive of that style, it may nevertheless remain "characterless": no personality "informs" the work. Alternatively, there may be personality traits expressed but they do not seem to belong to any particular individual. The work has an "anonymous" air about it, because the artistic acts are performed in a way which is common to a large number of different writers.²⁸ By contrast, as I have argued throughout this paper, the defining quality of an individual style is that it expresses a coherent set of attitudes, qualities of mind and so on which seem to belong to the individual writer of the work: a work which has an individual style expresses the personality of the implied author of that work.

Notes

- 1 Ian Watt, "The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors*: An Explication," reprinted in *Henry James*, ed. Tony Tanner (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 301.
- 2 See Richard Wollheim, "Pictorial Style: Two Views," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), pp. 129–45. My chief debt in this paper is to Wollheim, whose remark that style has "psychological reality" provided its initial stimulus.
- 3 See especially Richard Wollheim, "Expression," in *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures*, Vol. I, 1966–7, *The Human Agent* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), and *Art and its Objects* (2nd edition; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), sections 15–19. See also Guy Sircello, *Mind and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).
- 4 Guy Sircello, *Mind and Art*, Chapter 1. I am not sure whether Sircello would approve of the use to which I put the concept of artistic acts.

- 5 See Frank Sibley, "Aesthetic Concepts," in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, ed. Joseph Margolis (New York: Scribner, 1962), and a large subsequent literature.
- 6 Watt, "The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors*," p. 291.
- 7 Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), especially pp. 70–7. Kendall Walton has developed the related, but more general notion of an "apparent artist" in his paper "Points of View in Narrative and Depictive Representation", *Noûs* 10 (1976), pp. 49–61, and elsewhere. Walton's own theory of style, in which the idea of the "apparent artist" plays an important role, is to be found in "Style and the Products and Processes of Art," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979).
- 8 What "having a compassionate nature" means is a large question: presumably at the least it involves having certain beliefs and desires and being prone to certain kinds of behavior. For a discussion of compassion, see Lawrence Blum, "Compassion," in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
- 9 It is not appropriate for me to argue here for any general thesis about the correct way to interpret literary texts, but it is interesting to notice that my view that style is the expression of personality fits very nicely with a plausible theory of critical interpretation recently defended by Alexander Nehamas ("The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative Ideal," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 133–49). In his words,

To interpret a text is to consider it as its author's production. Literary texts are produced by agents and must be understood as such. . . . And since texts are products of expressive actions, understanding them is inseparably tied to understanding their agents.

Here Nehamas uses the word "author" to mean "implied author." His claim is that a text must be read as an expression of the attitudes and so on of the implied author. Of course it could turn out that Nehamas is wrong and the correct way to read literary texts is as the expression of attitudes in the actual author. My thesis can accommodate either view.

- 10 Compare the way in which actors "adopt" the personality which they express.
- 11 See Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 265.
- 12 Compare *Tristram Shandy* which is written in Tristram's (the narrator's) style. The implied author seems to have a personality much like that

- of Tristram, but he is distinct from Tristram and appears from time to time to correct Tristram's opinions in helpful footnotes.
- 13 See, for example, *The Oxen of the Sun* episode.
- 14 Notice that plays can have individual style despite the fact that they contain many different "voices."
- 15 However, the implied author of the late fragment *The Watsons* may seem less mature than the implied author of *Persuasion*.
- 16 From now on I shall write as if the personality expressed by the style of a work were that of the implied author, because typically this is the case. However the implied author may sometimes have all his or her properties in common with the actual author. Moreover, as I have already noticed, in some cases the personality expressed is that of the narrator.
- 17 "General and Individual Style in Literature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 43 (1984), I argue there that if a work belongs to a general style category, such as a school or period style, then it obeys certain rules and observes certain conventions, some of which undoubtedly foster certain kinds of formal and expressive properties. However, it is possible to write works which belong to a general style category and succeed to some extent in achieving the formal and expressive goals of that category without thereby expressing an individual personality in the implied author.
- 18
- There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things; . . .
- 19 Sometimes a writer performs the artistic act of "expressing" some quality, in the external world, as when she, for example, "expresses" the violence of a battle or the fragility of an elf. Again, however, it is not the violence or fragility themselves which contribute to style, but the way in which violence or fragility is "expressed" (in this sense) by the writer. Thus one woman may "express" the violence of a battle with gusto, thereby expressing "her" enjoyment of fast-moving action and enthusiasm for heroic exploits, whereas another may "express" the violence with cool detachment, thereby expressing "her" ironic awareness of human folly. For further discussion of this issue, see Guy Sircello, *Mind and Art*, Chapter 4, and my "Expressing the Way the World Is," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13 (1979), pp. 29-44.
- 20 Cf. Richard Wollheim, "Pictorial Style: Two Views." It is possible that there are taxonomies for general style categories, unlike individual style.
- 21 See Seymour Chatman, *The Later Style of Henry James* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), pp. 126-7. Chatman's book contains many more examples of non-salient (as well as salient) verbal features that are important to James' style. In his comparison between a successful parody of James' style (by Max Beerbohm) and a rather unsuccessful one (by W. H. D. Rouse), Chatman shows how Beerbohm incorporates into his parody many features of James' style which were obviously not salient to Rouse.
- 22 See the work on emotions by Amelie Rorty, "Explaining Emotions," and Patricia Greenspan, "A Case of Mixed Feelings: Ambivalence and the Logic of Emotion," both in Rorty, ed., *Explaining Emotions*.
- 23 Lee Brown brought this example to my attention.
- 24 If for example, *for no apparent reason*, an author describes a certain character with unqualified approval in chapters 1, 3 and 5 and with a certain kind of qualified disapproval in chapters 2, 4 and 6, then it might be that the implied author is schizophrenic or, more likely, simply a confused creation.
- 25 Nelson Goodman, "The Status of Style," *Critical Inquiry* 1 (1975), p. 801. Goodman's explanation for this fact is different from mine, however.
- 26 Goodman, "The Status of Style," p. 807.
- 27 See also my "General and Individual Style in Literature."
- 28 There are some general style categories such as the heroic epic, in which individual style is rarely found and might even be deemed inappropriate. The Homeric epics, however, do seem to contain passages that have individual style. It is interesting to note that the argument over the authorship of the *Iliad* is partly an argument about style and personality in the work. Those parts of the *Iliad* which have individual style provide a strong argument for scholars who wish to argue that there was one central author of the *Iliad* (call him "Homer") even though parts of it had been handed down by an oral tradition. By contrast, scholars who argue that there were a number of bards who contributed importantly to the creation of the *Iliad* point to the fact that there is no individual style to the *Iliad* as a whole. Interestingly, both sets of experts seem implicitly to grant the connection between individual style and an individual personality

which is expressed in the style. For an introduction to the problem of multiple authorship in the *Iliad*, see E. R. Dodds, "Homer," in *The Language*

and Background of Homer, ed. G. S. Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 1–21.

Criticism and Interpretation

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“... there must, in grammar, be reasons for what you say, or be [a] point in your saying of something, if what you say is to be comprehensible. We can understand what the words mean apart from why you say them; but apart from understanding the point of your saying them we cannot understand what you mean”.¹

Introduction

Insofar as not all artworks involve meaning, broadly construed, not all artworks call for interpretation. However, where artworks invite interpretation, interpretation is a natural stage in the critical evaluation of an artwork.² That is, where the artwork is about something, isolating what it is about – that is, interpreting its meaning – is an unavoidable step in establishing whether the artist has done a good or a bad job articulating whatever the work is about with respect to the means at her disposal. To take a fanciful example, if an architectural structure is about projecting strength, as a fortress like the Pentagon is, then it would be a questionable artistic choice to construct it out of plywood. For, that would hardly project strength.

In short, where a work is about something, a critical evaluation of the work will strive to ascertain whether the artist has discovered a suitable or adequate set of forms with which to embody the meaning or content of the work. In order to perform this assessment, of course, one first needs to determine the meaning or the content at hand. And that is the task of interpretation.

For our purposes, interpretation involves not only saying what a work is about, but also pointing out how the work is designed to support that meaning.³

The meaning or content of an artwork can take various shapes. There are themes and theses. Roughly, the topic or topics of a work are its theme, as the wrath of Achilles is the theme of the *Iliad*. Where a work stakes out a perspective or position on its theme, we can say it has a thesis. The recent film *Lincoln* by Steven Spielberg is about the abolition of slavery; that is its theme. But it also advances a thesis or perspective about its theme; it is in favor of the abolition of slavery. In addition to their communication of themes and theses, artworks may also possess meaning in terms of exhibiting expressive properties like sadness, joy or gloom. The objects of interpretation then are at least themes, theses, and expressive properties. In order to evaluate works that traffic in these sorts of meanings, we must first interpret them before we go on to judge whether the artist has or has not found an appropriate way to articulate them – that is, ways that successfully will support, reinforce, or enhance the meaning of the work.

Given that so much art does involve meaning, interpretation is key to a great deal of art criticism. For that reason, philosophical questions about the nature of interpretation lie at the heart of a philosophy of criticism. And, indeed, debates about interpretation – under the rubric of the intentional fallacy – might be said to have inaugurated the emergence of the philosophy of criticism in the analytic tradition of aesthetics.⁴

In this essay, I would like to revisit that debate in the hope of suggesting how I think we should conceive of the project of interpreting a work of art.

Alternative Views of Interpretation

Even if philosophers of art agree that the object of interpretation is the meaning of an artwork, conceived in terms of what it is about, there is a continuing debate about what determines that meaning and how we can (legitimately) come to know it. Some of the leading positions in this debate are: actual intentionalism, which comes in several variations – including radical intentionalism, more moderate forms of actual intentionalism, and hypothetical intentionalism, anti-intentionalism, and what we can call the value maximizing view of interpretation.

Historically, anti-intentionalism is probably the first position on interpretation to be worked out in the analytic tradition.⁵ On this view, what determines the meaning of a poem is the words of the poem in terms of their dictionary meanings, grammar, the history of words (and literary genres), and conventionally established ways of dealing with figurative language such as metaphor. What this excludes, putatively, is reference to the intentions of the poet. On this view, the intention of the author is outside of the text, whereas in order to appreciate a poem, we should attend to what is on the page – the words and sentences in their conventional usage. This position appeals to readers' intuitions by arguing that the poet cannot make a word mean anything he wishes simply by intending it. Humpty-Dumpty cannot make "glory" mean "a nice knock-down argument" by fiat. That view would be an example of radical actual intentionalism. Anti-intentionalism emerges in stark opposition to radical actual intentionalism.

Although in ordinary discourse, we aim at discovering what our interlocutors intend or mean

by their words, with respect to literature, the anti-intentionalist argues, our task is different. We aspire to learn what the text means. Insofar as a poem is a public affair, we aim at uncovering its public meaning, the meaning of the text in light primarily of the conventions of language.

The value maximizing view of interpretation shares many similarities with anti-intentionalism.⁶ On this view, the aim of an artwork, such as a poem, is to afford aesthetic experience. Consequently, the best interpretation of a poem is the one that delivers the most rewarding aesthetic experience. Since the author's meaning might not support the richest aesthetic experience and, indeed, might even impede it, the interpretation of the poem need not be limited to the author's intention. What determines the meaning of the poem is whatever delivers the best experience of the poem to the reader. And there is no reason to imagine that the intended meaning guarantees that.

The value maximizing approach to interpretation is a reader-response theory. The meaning of the poem is established by the reader's response in pursuit of the best experience of the poem. Of course, this position may put various constraints on readerly interpretations. Some value maximizers will restrict the interpretive play of the reader to those respected by anti-intentionalists. That is, readerly interpretive play must be conducted within the bounds of the conventional meanings of words and sentences, the history of words (and literary genres, styles, etc.), and the protocols for managing figurative language. Of course, value maximizers may permit even more latitude than this. What is common among value maximizers is their view that what determines the meaning of a poem is that which produces the best experience of the poem within certain specified constraints.

As already mentioned, those constraints can vary. For purposes of this essay, I will assume that the relevant value maximizers in this debate are somewhat conservative, agreeing with the anti-intentionalists about that which one is permitted to appeal in the pursuit of the meaning of the poem. I make this assumption because I intend to be dealing with the debate over interpretation from the perspective of analytic philosophers, and analytic philosophers tend to be conservative regarding the amount of interpretive play they find acceptable.

Both the value maximizers and the anti-intentionalists ground their understanding on views about the nature of the literary institution. They will admit that the interpretation of meaning in everyday affairs aims at discovering the intention of speakers. But they argue that matters are different with respect to literature, given the nature of that institution.

Actual intentionalists, on the other hand, question this presupposition. They see the interpretation of poems as on a continuum with the interpretation of the words and sentences of our conspecifics in daily discourse. Actual intentionalists, however, can be divided into different camps. Radical actual intentionalists claim that the meaning of the poem is whatever the poet claims she intended it to be – supposedly irrespective of the rules of language, etc. Other intentionalists are more moderate. They maintain that the meaning of the poem is determined by the poet's intention where that intention coincides with what the poem can be alleged to mean given linguistic practices.

Hypothetical intentionalism, in contrast, parts company with even more moderate forms of actual intentionalism.⁷ Hypothetical intentionalists frequently appear to agree with intentionalists that what an interpretation is amounts to a hypothesis about what the actual author intends, however, hypothetical intentionalists do not allow certain types of evidence to serve as a basis for that hypothesis. Specifically, they maintain that reference to an author's privately avowed intentions are interpretively inadmissible. That is, authorial statements about their intentions as found in private journals and diaries, or as disclosed in unpublished interviews with the authors, their friends, family, and/or their acquaintances are all out of bounds for the hypothetical intentionalists. Whereas the moderate forms of intentionalism will allow such evidence to play a role in interpretations, so long as those authorial intentions are consistent with the pertinent linguistic practices, the hypothetical intentionalism rejects this.

Rather than tracking the utterer's meaning with respect to the meaning of the poem, the hypothetical intentionalist claims to be aiming at the utterance meaning of the poem. Thus, the so-called utterance meaning of the poem as discovered by an ideal critic appears to determine the meaning of the poem. And like the

anti-intentionalist and the value maximizer, the hypothetical intentionalist bases her position on the supposed nature of the literary institution.

Joining the Debate

When considering these different theories of interpretation, it is useful to remember that each theory must answer two questions.⁸ It must have a defensible answer to the constitutive question – the question of what determines the meaning of the poem. And it will also have an answer to the epistemological question of how we are to go about ascertaining that meaning, notably in terms of what evidence is legitimate and what is not. It is helpful to keep these two questions in mind when we review the strengths and weaknesses of the preceding views, although unfortunately this distinction is not always respected in the actual debate.

Anti-intentionalism answers the constitutive question by maintaining that what fixes or determines the meaning of a poem involves the dictionary meaning of the words and sentences, the history of words (and literary genres), and the established procedures for managing figurative language, including metaphors. However, these resources cannot fix the meaning of a poem, since they underdetermine what the poem can mean. That is, appealing to only these factors may support multiple textual meanings rather than establishing its unique meaning. Conventional language usage is insufficient to answer the constitutive question, not to mention the problem with the proposed manner of dealing with figurative language (since there are no purely conventional ways of handling things like metaphors).

On the question of evidence, the anti-intentionalist bars reference to intentions because they are said to be remote from the poem. Intentions are in the head of the poet, whereas readers should be paying attention to what is on the page. Concern for authorial intention draws us away from what the poet has written. But this dichotomy and its supposed consequences are false. What is written on the page is our best evidence of what the poet intended. Concern for authorial intention does not draw us away from what the poet has written but rather asks readers to attend to it closely and deeply.

Anti-intentionalists will argue that the author's intentions are often unavailable. Who knows what Homer intended? We are not even sure who Homer was. But we can interpret his *Iliad*. Why think that things stand differently with authors who are temporally less distant? Do we ever truly understand another's mind? Thus, even here, the anti-intentionalist will often maintain that generally when we read a poem, the author's intentions are not ready to hand.

Of course, if what I wrote previously is correct, this worry is harmless, since as long as the poem is available to us, we do have access to what the author intended. Moreover, the concern about Homer seems exaggerated. In no other domain except literature does there seem to be much anxiety about discerning the intentions of historical agents. Historians feel confident in hypothesizing Xerxes's intentions, although we lack access to his diaries (if he had any). Why suppose that special alarms go off only when we are dealing with artworks?

Perhaps needless to say, one reason that historians are not anti-intentionalists is that they conceive of what they are doing as on a continuum with our ordinary practices of interpreting our conspecifics – an enterprise in which we typically succeed with amazing accuracy in identifying the intentions of others. It is true that sometimes we are mistaken and even deceived about the intentions of others. But more often than not, we are successful. Social life would be impossible otherwise. So why postulate that when it comes to literature, we suddenly must regard interpretation as playing by rules other than those that govern ordinary discourse and practices like history?

At this point, the anti-intentionalist is apt to claim that literature has special purposes that mandate that interpreting literature must differ from the way in which we interpret other forms of words and deeds. That is, literary interpretation allegedly abides by different rules than does ordinary interpretation. Of course, this does not appear to be borne out empirically.⁹ As many – and possibly even more – literary critics advert to authorial intentions or to hypotheses thereof as those who refrain.¹⁰

To this, the anti-intentionalist will respond that her claim is not meant descriptively but normatively, maintaining that it is a rule of the

institution, given the purposes of literature, that literary interpretation ought to differ from other sorts of interpretation (which characteristically aim at discovering authorial intent). Here it is up to the anti-intentionalist to name those purposes. Unfortunately, most often they do not or, where they do, their candidates, like artistic autonomy, are as controversial as their position on authorial intention.

Maybe it will be argued that literature is for contemplation not communication. Yet this is an article of post-Kantian doxa that has never won the battle of ideas and that is especially ill-suited for literary forms like the novel. Indeed, I would conjecture that most contemporary art, whether esoteric or exoteric, is designed with primarily communicative intent.

The value maximizing position on interpretation can be yoked together with anti-intentionalism by arguing that the purpose of literature, which the bracketing authorial intention subserves, is to secure as rewarding an interpretative experience as possible. Here, interpretive play is the relevant form of contemplation. Insofar as constraining aesthetic experience to authorial intentions might block certain interpretive possibilities, value maximizers reject a principled commitment to identifying authorial intention.

Obviously, something like the value maximizing view of interpretation could not supply a general answer to the constitutive question. It is patently absurd to contend that the meaning of what I say is determined or fixed by what will grant listeners the most pleasure in interpreting what I've said. But since this view is absurd in everyday contexts of interpretation, we can demand of value maximizers to tell us why they suppose it obtains when it comes to poetry.

Undoubtedly, we are likely to hear once again about the special purposes of literature.¹¹ Here the special purposes have to do with abetting maximally rich interpretive experiences. However, even if this is one of the purposes of literature, it is hardly the only one. Moreover, it is far from clear that that some of the other purposes of literature do not place constraints on how much latitude our interpretive play may take.

One of the other purposes of literature, inarguably, is communication. This mandates a concern in the relevant cases for authorial intention, not only on the grounds of the nature

of communication, but on moral grounds as well, since it is not only morally wrong to willfully misinterpret another's communication or to ignore another's intention, but it is self-degrading to do so as well.¹² The rewards of interpretive play are all well and good, however, they should not be purchased at the cost of neglecting the other purposes of literature. Communication is one of those aims. Thus, the rewards of interpretive activity should be sought within the bounds of communication, which is tied to the communication of authorial meaning.

Like anti-intentionalism and the value maximizing approach, hypothetical intentionalism claims to be grounded in the special purposes of the literary institution. For the hypothetical intentionalist, the aim of interpretation is to produce a hypothesis about what the author intended his poem to mean. In pursuit of this aim, the hypothetical intentionalist allows the idealized interpreter access to not only the author's text, but also to any of her statements about the text, so long as it is published and in the public domain, along with information about the historical context of the work, artistic and otherwise as well as knowledge of the author's oeuvre. On the basis of this kind of evidence, the hypothetical intentionalist proposes a hypothesis about what the author intended to communicate.

The hypothetical intentionalist places extreme emphasis on the notion that literature is a *public* institution. This, she believes, evidentially commits the critic in the process of interpreting the work to only information available in the public sphere, precluding reference to the author's private papers, diaries, journals, letters, etc. as well as unpublished interviews with the author, her family, friends, and acquaintances.

In most cases, the interpretation of the author's intention that is reached operating under the epistemic constraints defended by the hypothetical intentionalist and the interpretation arrived at by supplementing that evidence with insider information garnered from private letters and interviews are likely to converge. Nevertheless, it is possible for the two interpretations to part company. Where that happens, the hypothetical intentionalist, unlike the actual intentionalist, argues that only the interpretation based on publicly available consideration is admissible, even if the meaning disclosed in private authorial

communication is consistent with what is discernible in the artwork. Here, the hypothetical intentionalist may describe her commitment as favoring utterance meaning over utterer's meaning, ascribing the latter commitment to actual intentionalists.

The way in which the hypothetical intentionalist answers the constitutive question is open to several interpretations. She may simply maintain that the author's intention fixes or determines the meaning of the poem. In that case, the hypothetical intentionalist and the actual intentionalist are to that extent in agreement. They only disagree about what evidence is licit when it comes to interpreting the poem. The hypothetical intentionalist argues that it must be public. However, this rides on a distinction between what is public and what is private which will be very difficult to maintain in a non-arbitrary fashion, since what are the today's private letters, journals, manuscripts, and interviews are often published or made publicly available in library collections tomorrow.

Of course, the hypothetical intentionalist may suggest that what fixes the meaning of the poem is not the author's intention, but rather the interpretation reached by an ideal reader armed with the fullest powers of reason and all the information available about the historical context of the poem, artistic and otherwise, all of the published material about the author's life and times, including things such as her memoirs, letters, etc. along with complete knowledge of her oeuvre and those of her peers.

However, it is questionable whether this can serve to determine or fix the meaning of the poem. Given the Duhem-Quine postulate concerning the underdetermination of hypotheses by the evidence, our ideal readers are destined to come up with non-converging accounts of the meaning of the poem. That is, the evidence allowed by the hypothetical intentionalist will support different hypotheses from different ideal observers, thus providing no way to establish which one constitutes *the* meaning of the poem. One ideal reader, for example, may weigh the strength of her hypothesis in terms of its comprehensiveness, while another prizes specificity to a greater extent.

In contrast, the actual intentionalist has an answer to the question of the determinate meaning

of the poem, namely the hypothesis which coincides with the actual intention of the author (where that is consistent with what is available in the text).¹³

At present hypothetical intentionalism and a variant of actual intentionalism which I have come to call modest actual mentalism appear to be the leading theories being currently debated by analytic philosophers.¹⁴ Modest actual mentalism contends that the meaning of a poem is determined by the actual intentions and underlying, though not necessarily conscious, assumptions of the poet. That is, modest actual mentalism holds that the cognitive or, more broadly, mental stock of the artist fixes the meaning of the work, so long as said intentions, assumptions, etc. are consistent with what is available in the text. To the extent that the hypothetical intentionalist takes these to be the object of his hypotheses, hypothetical intentionalism and modest actual mentalism agree on the question of what constitutes the meaning of the poem and the two camps only disagree about what comprises the acceptable bodies of evidence for producing the relevant hypothesis.

Hypothetical intentionalism and modest actual mentalism share a roughly Gricean conception of meaning according to which someone means *x* if he intends to induce the belief in *x* in his audience *and* he intends his audience to recognize this intention.¹⁵ The hypothetical intentionalist worries that the actual intentionalism may result in off-the-wall interpretations where the author intends, for example, the inscription "black" to mean "white" in his poem. Thus, the hypothetical intentionalist contends that only public available considerations, like the conventional meanings of words, can be consulted thereby blocking any and all private, off-the-way intentions of actual authors. And this, the hypothetical argues, shows the superiority of hypothetical intentionalism over every variety of actual intentionalism, including modest actual mentalism.

However *pace* hypothetical intentionalism, there is no need to erect the aforesaid constraint, since it is already built into the Gricean conception of meaning that the hypothetical intentionalist, and the modest actual mentalist endorses. For, a genuine intention requires some expectation of success. To intend to communicate, one must operate in a way that is apt to enable one's

communicative intention to be realized and that entails that the speaker use words and sentences in ways that audiences will find intelligible, i.e., in ways the audience can recognize.

Of course, typically this involves using words and sentences conventionally. So, the modest actual mentalist responds to the hypothetical intentionalist's worries by noting that off-the-wall authorial intentions are already ruled out by what is required by the speaker's *genuine* intention to have the audience recognize his communicative intention. Hypothetical intentionalism has no special advantage when it comes to blocking off-the-wall authorial intentions.¹⁶ That has already been taken care of by the Gricean account of what it is to mean something.¹⁷

The Linguistic Fallacy

As astute readers have probably noticed, the preceding debate has been conducted exclusively in light of the written word, notably poetry. The reason I have framed it in this way is because this is how the issue was initially framed by Beardsley and Wimsatt in their article "The Intentional Fallacy", and the dialectic has proceeded, in large measure, in that fashion ever since. Thus, to enter the debate, I have had to engage it on its own terms, even though, as I will argue in this section, those terms are ill-advised. Indeed, I think that the attempt to model all art interpretation on the interpretation of the meaning of words and sentences is a fallacy, namely what I call the *Linguist Fallacy*.

Advancing anti-intentionalism with emphasis on linguistic meaning was immensely useful for its defenders inasmuch as it might have seemed intuitively plausible that language appears to have ways of fixing meaning without reference to intention, specifically through the conventional meanings of words as found in dictionaries. I, needless to repeat, do not accept the adequacy of this view. However, even if it were true, it would not support the most ambitious claims of the opponents of actual intentionalism.

For, the anti-intentionalists argue on the basis of the putative role of convention for fixing meaning in the language arts to the conclusion that anti-intentionalism obtains across the arts. That is, they generalize from what they claim

about poetry to the nonlinguistic arts, including the visual arts and music. But even if their contentions about poetry were completely true (a very controversial claim), the extrapolation from poetry to the nonlinguistic arts would be suspicious. For where literature in general and poetry in particular allow resort to dictionaries, the other arts don't. Most often pretending that they possess anything approximately like the meaning conventions recorded in dictionaries commits the Linguistic Fallacy.

In the 2012 movie adaptation of *Anna Karenina* by Joe Wright, much of the action of the story transpires on recognizably theatrical stage sets. Many of these scenes involve society events, such as a horse race. The audience is clearly intended to take note of this non-naturalistic handling of the relevant scenes. The viewer is invited, even nudged, to interpret the meaning of this *mise en scene*. Many commentators have surmised that, by means of this scenography, Wright intends to communicate something about the social milieu of the fiction, namely that it is one of rigidly prescribed roles that one must at least *appear* to follow. Why do we ascribe this meaning intention to Wright? Not on the basis of a cinematic dictionary that associates theater imagery with roles and appearances, but because that is the best explanation of what Wright might mean given Wright's other directorial choices.

Admittedly there is a history of using theatrical imagery to comment on society, ranging from Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* to Lars von Trier's *Dogville*. But this is not a fixed association as is the relation of a word to its referent, since theater imagery can also be used to communicate other themes, such as the ultimate artificiality of cinema, despite its usual claim to realism. With Wright's *Anna Karenina*, the audience must use the theater imagery as a metaphorical optic through which to filter the action. This is a matter of *abduction* that strongly contrasts with the way in which the audience *reads* Tolstoy's opening observation about unhappy families. We directly ask what the intention behind Wright's directorial choices might be because, even though there might be some precedents, there are no conventions we can invoke.

In the film *The Lives of Others*, the director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck drains bright colors out of many of the scenes, so that the

overall impression one has of existence in the GDR is that it is drab – the pervasive institutional grayness signaling an impoverished mode of living. There is, needless to say, no fixed, conventional cinematic correlation that links an absence of bright colors and a presence of dull ones to a diminished quality of life. Rather we infer that this is Donnersmarck's intended point since it fits so well with his other directorial choices.

Likewise when in the motion picture *Zero Dark Thirty*, Kathryn Bigelow, relative to your average suspense film, protracts the process up to the assault on Bin Laden's compound, there is no book of fixed-associative correlations or syntactical rules that establishes what this strategy means. Rather, we infer that she intends to communicate some of the tediousness that such work involves, given the overall emphasis in the film on the hunt for Bin Laden as a sort of police procedural.

Nor, of course, are movies the only artform where meaning must be sought in intention since there are none of the sort of meaning conventions you find in dictionaries available for consultation. For example, in the prelude to *Das Rheingold*, Wagner goes for one hundred and thirty five measures before there is a key change. Why? There are no opera dictionaries that reveal what such a musical structure means. Instead we infer that Wagner intended to signal by this device the calm and untroubled nature of the Rhine at the beginning of the opera. That appears to be the best conjecture for the meaning of this orchestral choice in terms of its contrastive function in the context of the opera as a whole.

In dance, consider the Rose Adagio section of *The Sleeping Beauty*. As Aurora, the Sleeping Beauty, dances with the four suitors, she becomes progressively less physically dependent upon support, until finally she stand on one leg on pointe in an *arabesque en arrière* position, signaling that she now grown-up and independent. Here it is not the case that an *arabesque en arrière* carries any conventional associations. Rather we interpret the choice of this step in this way because it is the best hypothesis we can offer of what the actual choreographer intended to communicate about the princess at this point in the narrative.

Of course, what we have been arguing about motion pictures, dance, and music pertains to the fine arts as well. In Picasso's *Mademoiselles*

d'Avignon, which Picasso preferred to refer to as *My Brothel*, the prostitute on the extreme left with the gray face has a right leg that looks rather like rough-hewn blade – somewhat resembling a butcher's ax. There is no pictorial code to tell us what this "ax leg" means; instead we must ask what Picasso might have had in mind when making this authorial choice; was it that he intended it to insinuate brutishness and menace into the image.

Similarly, when George Grosz depicts Weimar plutocrats as porcine, with outsized, slobbering lips and bloated bodies, fat cigars stuffing their mouths, there is no decoding manual for reading these images. In fact, we do not literally read these images; we take the distortions in these figures to mirror what Grosz ostensibly finds essential in the appetitive, consuming social system – a.k.a. capitalism – that these bankers and businessmen represent.

The point of all these examples so far is that even if it were true that dictionary-like conventions could entirely fix the meaning of poems (which I doubt), this model could not be generalized to all of the arts, since, to a very large extent, many of the other arts, like architecture and sculpture, as well as the ones canvassed already, lack those conventions. And even some of the arts that possess language, like theater, also have communicative elements, like set design, lighting, blocking, and so forth, that must be deciphered abductively rather than by anything like reading.

For the most part, creative choices in the non-linguistic arts can only be comprehended by hypothesizing the intentions of the artists, since there is rarely anything approaching the meaning-conventions of the linguistic arts to consult. Indeed, inasmuch as the strategies we are talking about are *choices*, they need to be understood in terms of the intentions they aim to realize. We do not approach paintings, movies, music, etc. as we read a printed page. We interpret them as we interpret actions. We ask what the artist has done by making these choices which, in turn, must involve questions about what was intended by performing the pertinent communicative action.

Of course, even if literature in general and poetry in particular did determine part of their meanings by way of associative conventions, that would not be the whole story, even for the linguistic arts. For, many of the choices in literary

works have nothing to do with conventions like dictionary meanings. The dictionary can give us a range of the meanings of William Burroughs's words when he wrote: "You can cut into *The Naked Lunch* at any intersection point". But no dictionary or handbook of literary tropes is going to tell you what this strategy portends. What does Burroughs mean to communicate by instructing the reader that she may start reading the book wherever she wishes and continue on jumping randomly from one section to the other? To determine that, we have to speculate about Burroughs's intentions, and, if we are modest actual mentalists, we will also allow ourselves access to whatever evidence, public or private, that enables us to nail it.

Perhaps needless to say, with respect to literature, we don't have to resort to such experimental examples in order to make the case that interpreting literature involves more than tracking the meaning of words. Novels have characters and we may ask why an author has invested a given character with certain properties. What is Mann's point in making Septembrini so enthusiastic in *The Magic Mountain*. Indeed, even some of our interpretive questions about the linguistic choices in literature have nothing to do with what can be gleaned from a dictionary. For example, why are so many of Edgar Allen Poe's short stories written in the first person?

Moreover, this is true even of lyric poetry, the anti-intentionalist's preferred example. Recall the opening lines of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 30*:

When to the sessions of sweet, silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past
I sigh the lack of many a thing I thought.

No dictionary will tell you the expressive meaning of the emphatic alliteration on the letters; instead one needs to intuit the melancholic quality suggested by the subdued, hushed music of the word-sounds.

Although it is true that we do not have to go to the avant-garde in order to support our claim that much interpretation cannot even be remotely conceived to be modeled on the understanding of word in terms of their dictionary meanings, the practice of various avant-gardes, literary and otherwise, drives that point home very effectively. For, the genuine avant-garde proceeds by breaking

with conventions, and, obviously, it is not the case that there are conventions for breaking with conventions. That would be self-defeating, if not pragmatically self-refuting.

Typically, avant-garde artworks proceed by a kind of conversational implicature. They are presented in a context that indicates a commitment to public communication, but they go on to undermine customary protocols of communication in the relevant milieu, leaving us to infer how this breach could be relevant in context. With his *Brillo Box*, Warhol presented a facsimile of a carton of Proctor and Gamble's famous steel-wool cleansing pads. That is, he placed on the gallery floor what looked like it more appropriately belonged in a grocery store warehouse. In other words, he put a commodity in the space reserved for art. Assuming that he was making some point that was relevant within this artworld setting, one suspects that he meant to communicate the idea that art is a commodity.

This is the way in which a very great deal of avant-garde art communicates. It adopts a strategy that subverts expectations, but in a way that intends to say something relevant to its art historical circumstances. The audience figures out what the work means by attempting to grock what an informed participant in the discourses of the artworld could intend to get across by upending our presumptions in telling directions, such as inserting the simulacrum of a commodity, a commercial packing carton, into the network of the artworld at just that point where one would anticipate finding something discernibly different, something that looked like the kind of thing we antecedently identified as an artwork.

Likewise, in 4' 33", by presenting listeners with silence in the context of a concert situation, Cage prompts us to locate his intention in breaking with tradition. We presume that he is committed to communicating with us something relevant to musical practice but that cannot be discovered by invoking conventions. Alternatively, we have to attempt to divine what a composer as accomplished as Cage could intend to bring to our attention by framing silence. One interpretation, amply confirmed by Cage's writings, of course, is that the absence of music is not silence and in that noise there is much that is worthy of attention.¹⁸

The practice of the avant-garde brings out very dramatically a condition of much artistic

communication. That it is not to be understood in terms of conventions but in terms of authorial intentions, for the simple reason, among other things, that, for the most part, most nonlinguistic art lacks the dictionary meaning conventions found in practices like poetry and even the linguistic artforms communicate through artistic choices that cannot be parsed like linguistic associations.

To suppose that the linguistic interpretation of literature in terms of the information available in dictionaries provides a model for all the arts is to commit the Linguistic Fallacy. Even if the conventional meaning approach determined the meaning of literary utterances, which, as we saw in the previous section is very controversial, there is no reason to believe that it could be extended to artforms that lack those dictionary-like meaning associations. Indeed, the convention, dictionary meaning model does not even suffice to guide the interpretation of every aspect of literature. Rather, it is more appropriate to approach artistic choices across the board as actions where intentions are relevant to the interpretation of what the artist has done. Where interpretation is pertinent, the artist has performed an action – a communicative action – which needs to be comprehended in terms of what the artist intended to do. Where the artist employs conventions in pursuit of her ends, this provides us with evidence of what she means. It does not determine what she means. Her intention does.

Notes

- 1 S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, Oxford UP 1979, p. 206.
- 2 See N. Carroll, *On Criticism*, Routledge, London 2009.
- 3 N.B.: By saying "how it is designed", we leave open the question of whether it has succeeded or not.
- 4 See W. K. Wimsatt, M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy", in: *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, ed. A. Neill, A. Ridley, McGraw Hill, New York 1995.
- 5 *Ibidem*.
- 6 See S. Davies, "Authors' Intentions, Literary Interpretation and Literary Value", in: *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 46, No. 3 (July, 2006), pp. 223–247.
- 7 See J. Levinson, *Contemplating Art*, The Clarendon Press, Oxford 2006.

- 8 S. Neale, "Implicit Meaning", in: *Meaning and Other Things: Essays on Stephen Schiffer*, ed. G. Ostertag, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, forthcoming.
- 9 One consideration that at least *suggests* that the literary institution is not categorically anti-intentionalist is that misprints in literary works are typically corrected to coincide with what the author intended. Of course, if the misprint stands because that is what the poet desires (perhaps because she thinks it makes for a better [new] poem), that too is a matter of authorial intention.
- 10 Foreexample, in interpreting A.R. Ammons's poem "Mansion," M.H. Abrams appeals to information that Roger Gilbert culled from Ammons' papers. See: M.H. Abrams, "The Fourth Dimension of a Poem", in: *The Fourth Dimension of a Poem and Other Essays*, W.W. Norton, New York 2012, p. 27.
- 11 Needless to say, some literary works are only for contemplation, but this too is a matter of intention.
- 12 In order to confirm the wrongness of misconstruing another's words, consider the indignation you feel when you are the subject of a willful misinterpretation.
- 13 It might be thought that the hypothetical intentionalist can maintain that context determines the meaning of the text. But context at most supplies evidence for an interpretation. It cannot fix the meaning of a poem since context underdetermines meaning. Rather it is only evidence of authorial intention.
- 14 See N. Carroll, "Art Interpretation", in: *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, I 51 (2) 2011, pp. 117–135.
- 15 P. Grice, "Meaning", in: *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1987, p. 219. See also S. Neale, "Paul Grice's Philosophy of Language", in: *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 15(1992), pp. 509–559.
- 16 A more technical way of putting this would be to say that the hypothetical intentionalist has no reason to invoke utterance meaning, since utterer's meaning, construed in terms of Gricean intentions, already commits the utterer to abiding by the conventional meaning of words and sentences insofar as that is entailed by a genuine intention to have his communicative intention recognized by audiences. Indeed, the very notion of utterance meaning itself is redundant given what is required for an utterer to genuinely intend to communicate. Utterer's meaning is enough.
- 17 This may leave the question of what the meaning of a poetic unit is when the author's intention is not supported by what is written. There are two alternative here. I can say that it doesn't mean anything or that it possesses whatever range of meanings the text allows. The former seems to me counterintuitive. So, I prefer the latter alternative. This, of course, concedes indeterminacy of meaning in these cases. Nevertheless, this amount of indeterminacy is less than what is found in the positions that are rival to modest actual mentalism.
- 18 See N. Carroll, "Cage and Philosophy", in: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52, 1 (Winter, 1994), pp. 93–98.

The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative Ideal

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Il n'y a pas une parole qu'on puisse comprendre, si l'on va au fond.
— Paul Valéry

Critical pluralism, broadly stated, is the view that literary texts, unlike natural phenomena, for which there is only one correct explanation, can be given many equally acceptable, even though incompatible, interpretations. But the thesis that, in contrast to science, “the use . . . of diverse but complementary vantages [is] not only rationally justifiable, but necessary to the understanding of art, and indeed of any subject of humanistic inquiry” seems to me to make a virtue out of necessity and a necessity out of fact.¹

Such a fact is that within sixty years of its publication, a fiction like Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* had already provoked 148 studies, of an astonishing variety.² This fact has been transformed into a virtue by Stanley Corngold, who accounts for this flood of criticism by attributing it to the very

point of the story and, ultimately, to the very nature of literature. Corngold interprets Samsa’s change into what is an essentially vague, incomplete, and indescribable monster as an allegory for writing itself – an activity which, according to many recent literary theorists, is bound to result in imperfect communication, unavoidable misunderstanding, and inevitable misreading: “The negativity of the vermin has to be seen as rooted . . . in the literary enterprise itself . . . The creature . . . is . . . language itself (*parole*) – a word broken loose from the context of language (*langage*), fallen into a void of meaning which it cannot signify, near others who cannot understand it” (*Commentator’s Despair*, pp. 26, 27). If this is so, why should we be surprised that the story, like all literature, will not yield itself to a definitive interpretation?

But of course Corngold’s view is reached through an interpretation which must be itself correct if it is to explain why there cannot be a correct interpretation of the story. And this

Alexander Nehamas, “The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative Ideal” in *Critical Inquiry* 8(1), 1981, pp. 133–149. Reproduced with permission of the author and The University of Chicago Press.

paradox of method is parallel to a paradox of content. *The Metamorphosis*, on this view, concerns the inability of literature to achieve perfect communication and so to receive final interpretation. This is what the story communicates. But if it succeeds in communicating it, it communicates that it fails to communicate; and if it fails, since this failure is what it communicates, it succeeds!

The claim that literature can ultimately communicate only that it cannot ultimately communicate is not uncommon in recent literary theory.³ I suspect that it is reached by illegitimately extending the thesis that words are polysemous or radically ambiguous. The extension is made by assuming that if a text has a property (if, in particular, a word is ambiguous), then it refers to that property (the word signifies ambiguity). Thus, for example, given the fact that the sentence "The green is either" is ungrammatical, Jacques Derrida infers that "it signifies an example of ungrammaticality."⁴ To offer another example, J. Hillis Miller assumes that the history of words is essential to their meaning and writes:

The effect of etymological retracing is not to ground the word solidly but to render it unstable, equivocal, wavering, abysmal. All etymology is false etymology, both in the sense that there is always some bend or discontinuity in the etymological line, and in the sense that etymology always fails to find an *etymon*, a true literal meaning at the origin.⁵

If texts indeed consist of words so construed, it may seem to follow that "a text never has a single meaning, but is the crossroads of multiple ambiguous meanings"⁶ and that therefore every text "is 'unreadable', if by 'readable' one means open to a single, definitive, univocal interpretation."⁷ This raises two questions. The first, which I shall not try to answer here, is why we must assume that a word must have had an original literal use in order to be univocal now and why we need to accept the "Rousseauistic or Condillacian law that all words were originally metaphors."⁸ The second, to which I shall pay close attention, is why we must agree that to be "readable," a text must have a definitive interpretation – if by "definitive" we mean "unrevisable." For though the absence of an unrevisable interpretation

implies that we can change our mind about what a text means, it does not imply that what a text means changes along with our mind.

Deconstructive critics begin with the realization that written texts are enormously independent of their writers and then proceed to sever altogether, at least in theory, the connection between author and text. Since writing remains "when the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written," Derrida argues, "the text is cut off from all absolute responsibility, from *consciousness* as the ultimate authority, orphaned and separated at birth."⁹ Geoffrey Hartman traces the idea of recovering authors' intentions to the Renaissance, with its concern for establishing original texts, and argues that "the more learning and scholarship we bring to an author, with the aim of defining his difference or individual contribution, the less certainty there seems to be of succeeding in this." Hartman concludes that "the notion of unique works of art, certified by the personal name of the author, fades away into nostalgia."¹⁰ Michel Foucault goes even further and claims that the author is a fiction created, more or less, by Saint Jerome, now moribund and an object of indifference: "What matter who's talking?"¹¹ In a work otherwise unsympathetic to post-structuralism, Jonathan Culler accepts this view when he writes, "The meaning of a sentence, one might say, is not a form or an essence, present at the moment of its production and lying behind it as a truth to be recovered, but the series of developments to which it gives rise, as determined by past and future relations between words and the conventions of semiotic systems."¹² The object of criticism cannot therefore be what the author meant by a text but what a text means in itself. Since in itself a text means what its constituents have ever meant, and since (according to deconstruction) no constituent is univocal, the text turns out to be the "crossroads" of all of its constituents' incompatible senses.

This radical pluralism is thus grounded on a view about the nature of texts, some of the many meanings of which are exhibited, with equal plausibility, by different interpretations. But interpretations, too, are written texts, and they also need to but cannot be read. Just as every reading is a misreading, so it will be in turn misread. As Miller says,

The new turn in criticism involves an interrogation of the notion of the self-enclosed literary work and of the idea that any work has a fixed, identifiable meaning. The literary work is seen in various ways as open and unpredictably productive. The reading of a poem is part of the poem. This reading is productive in its turn. It produces multiple interpretations, further language about the poem's language, in an interminable activity without necessary closure.¹³

But we, at least, have now been brought to the closure of the exposition which opened with our paradoxical reading of *The Metamorphosis*. According to this reading, writing cannot communicate; every text is misread since a reading is just an effort to impose a single coherent meaning on the text and thus presupposes that communication has succeeded. Itself an instance of this law, *The Metamorphosis* has generated a large number of readings; yet, "any reading can be shown to be a misreading on evidence drawn from the text itself."¹⁴ Every reading will thus be replaced, and every new reading will be in turn misread, all circling continually around a non-existent center, each an effort to isolate an imaginary "literal meaning at the origin," each a falcon without a falconer.

Appalled by the anarchy he takes this view to lead into, E. D. Hirsch has insisted that one of each text's many interpretations, the author's own, must be taken as canonical: "If the meaning of the text is not the author's, then no interpretation can possibly correspond to *the* meaning of a text, since the text can have no determinate or determinable meaning."¹⁵ Behind this view lies a theory of meaning which is ultimately derived from the work of I. A. Richards, who wrote that

[the] logical use of words with constant senses that are the same for each occurrence . . . is an extremely artificial sort of behavior. . . . And the fluidity, the incessant delicate variation of the meaning of our words . . . is the virtue of language for our other purposes. [It is not true] that if a passage means one thing it cannot mean another and an incompatible thing.¹⁶

Hirsch maintains his monism in the light of, or perhaps despite, his theory about the meaning of texts: "The nature of the text is to have no meaning except that which an interpreter will

into existence. . . . A text [is] only an occasion for meaning, in itself an ambiguous form devoid of the consciousness where meaning abides."¹⁷

To this view, which bears important similarities to the approach of Hirsch's opponents, one can make, with the King in *Alice in Wonderland*, an easy reply: "If there's no meaning in it . . . that saves a lot of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any." But the witticism and its wording only serve to raise the crucial question: Is a text's meaning found, or is it made? Both sides initially agree that meaning is made, that a text means just what it is taken to mean by its interpreters.¹⁸ Deconstruction infers that critics should therefore do self-consciously what they do in any case, which is to make their own meaning out of every text. Hirsch, by contrast, claims that critics ought now to go on to discover the meaning which a text was made to have by its author.

There is a large gap between the monism advocated by Hirsch and the radical pluralism which follows from the writing of some deconstructive critics. Within this gap are located some recent writers who argue that the meaning of a text is partly found and partly made. This argument is the basis for the limited pluralism of M. H. Abrams, Peter Jones, and Jack Meiland, according to which the "rules of the language" to which a text belongs determine a fundamental level of meaning, independent of all points of view, given to and found by the interpreter.¹⁹ But just as the locutionary content of a sentence does not by itself determine what illocution that sentence is being used to perform in a particular case, so this "central core," though it limits the legitimate overall interpretations of a text, does not exhaust its meaning. Meiland, for example, calls this fundamental level the "textual meaning" and distinguishes it from the "literary meaning," over which critical disagreement occurs. He writes that "the agreed-upon textual meaning can serve as a criterion of validity for interpretations at the level of literary meaning. . . . Any literary interpretation which does not cohere with basic agreed-upon textual meaning can be ruled out as an invalid interpretation" ("Interpretation," p. 36).

The central difficulty with this view is that, in my opinion, it simply tends to reify whatever it is that a text's interpreters do and do not, at some particular time, agree about. Textually, Meiland

writes, "*Romeo and Juliet* is about a man and a woman who are in love with one another, whose families prevent their marrying, and who die due to a tragic misunderstanding" ("Interpretation," p. 35). But is this obvious because it is determined solely by the rules of English, or is it because it constitutes such a minimal interpretation, chosen just because the critics of the text are likely to agree about it?²⁰

The existence of a well-defined notion of literal or dictionary meaning which can be of use to this view is itself problematic. Do dictionaries give us what words must essentially mean in all their uses, or do they simply supply us with a rough guess, a coarse grid against which, but not necessarily within which, to locate individual words and phrases? Whatever the answer to this question, even if we assume that the notion of a word's literal meaning is well defined, the difficulties of this theory are far from over. The main problem is that it is not possible to identify "textual meaning" with the literal meaning of the words of which a text consists. The words' literal meaning is specified through a set of roughly synonymous words supplied by the dictionary. But the textual meaning is a summary or paraphrase, that is, an interpretation (however minimal) of what these words, *given their literal meaning*, are being used to do on this particular occasion.

If textual meaning is a minimal interpretation of a text, then it is not surprising that it is compatible with a number of "literary" meanings, since these now turn out to be more specific interpretations of the text. For it is clear that a number of more particular specifications of any object are compatible with a more general specification of that object, even if they conflict with one another. Something can be an item of furniture and also a chair, a chaise, or a sofa; it can be any of these and also Louis XVI, Empire, or Directory style. None of this shows that it is all of these things. Similarly, though the textual meaning of *Romeo and Juliet* fails to determine a single overall reading of the play, this does not show that the play does have the many literary meanings that have been attributed to it. Compatibility with textual meaning is at best a necessary condition for validity, but this trivial fact offers no support for any sort of pluralism.

Such compatibility is *at best* necessary for validity because in fact we can both disagree

about and revise our views of textual meaning. The object we were just imagining may turn out not to be an item of furniture at all but a strange machine; just so, we may revise our minimal interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Though we are likely to agree about textual meaning, we cannot take this agreement for granted; textual meaning depends on substantive as well as on linguistic considerations. Are *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, a man and a woman or a boy and a girl? But more importantly, in many cases where our minimal and more specific interpretations are in conflict, we may choose to modify the former rather than to reject the latter. Our construal of *Romeo's* scream, "The time and my intent is savage-wild/More fierce and inexorable far/Than empty tigers and the roaring sea" has serious consequences for the nature of the misunderstanding which leads to his death.

But if textual meaning is not given, if it is also, like literary meaning, the product of revisable interpretation, have we not granted deconstruction all that it wanted in the first place?²¹ Derrida is describing a view not unlike Meiland's when he writes that "the concept of a centered structure is in fact the concept of a free-play based on a fundamental ground, a free-play which is constituted upon a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which is itself beyond the reach of the free-play."²² The "center" is for Derrida the obvious or intuitive reading of a text, Meiland's textual meaning. Derrida argues that even the most obvious reading is the result of interpretation and can therefore be questioned, revised, or displaced.²³

This is, I think, correct. Just as in scientific explanation there are no data immune to revision, so in literary criticism there are no readings impervious to question. But the fact about science does not show that apparently competing scientific theories are incommensurable and that therefore we cannot judge between them or that each such theory concerns its own distinct world.²⁴ Similarly, the point about criticism does not show that different interpretations of a text are, even if apparently incompatible, equally acceptable or that a text has as many meanings as there are interpretations of it. Readings are neither arbitrary nor self-validating simply because they are all subject to revision. Newer readings are always guided by the strengths and

weaknesses of those which already exist; and though this process may never stop, it is not for that very reason blind.

Jones has tried to supply stronger support for the pluralist thesis. He claims that interpretation, "the business of making sense of the text, of rendering it coherent," is necessarily "aspectival"; he understands aspect as both "the point of view from which something is seen, and the appearance or face of the object perused" (*Philosophy and the Novel*, pp. 182, 181). His conclusion is that since every interpretation involves a viewpoint, and since no viewpoint (biographical, Marxist, psychoanalytical, etc.) is privileged, different readings of a text, even if apparently incompatible, can be equally acceptable.

Now consider the following case. In *The Metamorphosis*, there is a picture of a woman on the wall of Samsa's bedroom. A number of widely diverse readings of the story all take the picture as an object of Samsa's sexual interest. This unexciting fact is sufficient to show that though the activity of interpretation can proceed from different viewpoints, its results need not therefore be themselves different. Nor is it easy to show that if the results of different approaches are indeed different, then they are equally plausible. For we can, I think, produce a better (not simply a different) interpretation of the role this picture plays in Kafka's story. The text speaks of a glossy-magazine picture of "a lady done up in a fur hat and a fur boa, sitting upright and raising against the viewer a heavy fur muff in which her whole forearm has disappeared." Now Heinz Politzer describes this picture as "vulgar . . . animallike"; Robert Adams thinks that it is of an "impudent salacity"; Hellmuth Kaiser claims that it portrays an "erotically active, aggressive woman"; and Peter Dow Webster takes this woman as an "earth-mother."²⁵ These descriptions do not correspond to anything in the text, but once they are casually introduced, they tend to become, for some, parts of the story itself, and the picture thus acquires an erotic content. It is a short step from this to finding sexual significance in the insect's covering the picture with his body in order to protect it from being taken from his room along with the rest of his furniture. But what we do know about the picture is that it comes from a magazine and that it is of no one in particular (which accounts, incidentally, for its

sketchy description). It is an object of no character and no individuality. If anything about it is interesting, it is that while it seems to be a picture of no interest, Gregor has made a frame for it himself: this is the only productive work we know him to have done, the only thing he has actually made. What he is protecting from being taken away, by assuming a position dictated to him more by his anatomy than by his desires, is his only real creation, his only real possession. That his most expressive action has been devoted to framing and bringing into prominence an object which is not so vulgar as it is banal underscores the shallowness of Gregor's relationship to the world and the depth of his attachment to that shallowness.

Interpretation is therefore in one sense aspectival, but criticism is not for this reason less than "objective." Different ways of trying to understand a text may well be equally legitimate: there probably isn't a general argument to the effect that psychoanalytic criticism, for example, should not be practiced. But simply because an activity can be pursued in different ways, it does not follow that different results must be reached; nor that if they are, then they must be equally plausible.

Jones draws this stronger conclusion when he slips into considering interpretation no longer as an activity but as that activity's very product: "The background against which, or the viewpoint from which, we interpret a text generally provides the most interesting differences between interpretations, between the patterns of coherence different critics determine" (*Philosophy and the Novel*, p. 186). Just as "aspect" covered both viewpoints and what is seen from them, so "interpretation" covers both the "business" of finding a pattern of coherence in a text and that pattern itself. Yet though it is necessarily true that to peruse an object we must (geometrically, so to speak) do so through one of its appearances, faces, or aspects, what we peruse is not the appearance but the object. We cannot simply appeal to the different methods critics use in order to justify their different readings, though we sometimes think we can because we take what is true of the process of interpretation to be true of its product.

We are concerned with a pluralism of contents, not of modes or methods, with the view

that the results of different approaches to a text, even if apparently incompatible, can be equally plausible parts or aspects of what the text means.²⁶ This would be, for example, the view that Gregor's metamorphosis stands as much for his alienation from a world of unproductive labor as for his regression to the anal stage because of an unresolved Oedipal conflict. Both views, so stated, seem plausible, and so does the pluralist position which tries to account for this appearance. But if we look at the texture of these interpretations, their plausibility ceases to be striking. The psychoanalytic reading, for example, must construe Gregor's father's kicking the vermin when it is stuck in a doorway as an act of pure aggression; Gregor, by contrast, and quite correctly, sees it as his "salvation." The Marxist reading fails to account for the effect his sister's music has on Gregor just before his death. Interesting difficulties facing interpretation are usually found on this specific level; we often grant a particular reading plausibility by not looking enough at its details.²⁷

Actually, the proliferation of difficulties on this specific level may make it seem again as though the deconstructive view that every reading is a misreading is correct. And, in a way, it is, since every reading can be confronted with contrary evidence. But the absence of a reading which cannot be improved, which accounts for every feature, does not make a text "unreadable": it only indicates that there is more to understand. There is no definite description, explanation, or theory of anything. And though replacement may not proceed from worse to better in every individual case, it tends on the whole to preserve good readings in order to supplant them with others that are better.

This implies that we understand *The Metamorphosis* better today than it was understood in the past and that we will come to understand it better in the future. And though no aspect of our understanding of the story is given, we can on each occasion agree on the significance of some of its elements in a way which allows us to compare and evaluate, even if only tentatively, alternative readings.²⁸ This is not obvious as long as we try to compare in general terms a Marxist, say, and a psychoanalytic reading of *The Metamorphosis*: on this level, to ask "Which is better?" is to ask a silly question. But the point begins to

appear if we turn to the specific, if less exciting, issues which we have been discussing here.

Miller writes, correctly, that "the 'obvious or univocal reading' of a [text] is not identical to the [text] itself"²⁹ – no reading ever is. Readings, interpretations, do not re-create or duplicate a text's meaning, they describe it.³⁰ To understand a text at all is to have an interpretation of it, and it is only in the light of one interpretation that we come to see, if and when we do, that a text can be read differently, that another interpretation is better. Thus from the point of view of a particular reading, the meaning which a later interpretation will attribute to a text does not exist. Nevertheless, the later interpretation does not, in absolute terms, create that meaning: it finds a meaning which, from its own point of view, had always been there. This is so, of course, only from its own point of view. But we cannot coherently describe this as "only a point of view" unless we produce yet another interpretation attributing to the text yet another meaning from yet another point of view (to be specified as such only by means of a further interpretation).

Meaning does not therefore reside in texts independently of all interpretation, there to be discovered once and for all or, if we are not lucky, to be forever lost; but this is not to say that it is fabricated. The critical monism which I advocate is a regulative ideal and identifies the meaning of a text with whatever is specified by that text's ideal interpretation. Such an interpretation would account for all of the text's features, though we can never reach it since it is unlikely that we can even understand what it is to speak of "all the features" of anything. What we do have (and that is what we need) is the notion of one interpretation answering more questions about a text than another and thus being closer to that hypothetical ideal which would answer all questions. The direction in which this ideal lies may change as new interpretations reveal features of a text previously unnoticed, rearrange the significance of those already accounted for, or even cause us to change some of our general critical canons. And though, in this way, there may not be a single ideal interpretation of a text toward which all of our actual interpretations in fact lead, the transition from one interpretation to another can still be rational and justified. To interpret a text is to place it in a context which accounts for as many

of its features as possible; but which features to account for, which are more significant than others, is itself a question conditioned by those interpretations of the text which already exist.³¹

To interpret a text is to place it in a context, and this is to construe it as someone's production, directed at certain purposes. A purpose is neither the end toward which motives aim, nor a text's "perlocutionary" effects, nor again a message lying behind the surface.³² Meaning is a symbolic relation; and what an object symbolizes depends partly on which of many systems it can be construed as an element of.³³ At least the choice of symbol system is an intentional act, and to appeal to intention is to appeal to a particular explanation of why a text, or one of its features, is as it is. The picture of the woman is used in *The Metamorphosis* to show the banality of Gregor's life. This account is intentional in that it is teleological. But it is not thereby vulnerable to those sound arguments against appealing to intention construed as "design or plan in the author's mind" or as the efficient cause of that feature.³⁴

To interpret a text is to consider it as its author's production.³⁵ Literary texts are produced by agents and must be understood as such. This seems to me self-evident; even deconstructive criticism generally accepts it, though it insists that the choice of agent is conventional and arbitrary. And since texts are products of expressive actions, understanding them is inseparably tied to understanding their agents. But just as the author is not identical with a text's fictional narrator, so he is also distinct from its historical writer. The author is postulated as the agent whose actions account for the text's features; he is a character, a hypothesis which is accepted provisionally, guides interpretation, and is in turn modified in its light. The author, unlike the writer, is not a text's efficient cause but, so to speak, its formal cause, manifested in thought not identical with it.³⁶

A methodological constraint on this view is that the postulated author be historically plausible; the principle is that a text does not mean what its writer could not, historically, have meant by it. For example, we cannot attribute to particular words meanings which they came to have only after the writer's death.³⁷ What a writer could mean can be determined by linguistic or biographical considerations but also by facts about the history of literature and the world, psy-

chology, anthropology, and much else besides, a change in our understanding of any of which can cause us to change our understanding of the text.

Meaning therefore depends on an author's intentions even if a writer is not aware of it. Since the author's intentions depend on what the writer could have meant, a text's meaning is to that extent a thing of the past, though its understanding is itself a thing of the future. Without Freud we would not have seen the sexual elements which are now part and parcel of *Oedipus Rex*. But if the Oedipal conflict is as basic to behavior as Freud thought, then the historical Sophocles, unaware of it as he may have been, could have considered it an issue. And we can argue from this that the character Sophocles, the play's author, did consider it an issue; it is then part of the play's meaning even if we could not have realized it until this century.

We must not, by contrast, accept a view of *The Metamorphosis* which holds that hours on the clock correspond to years in Gregor's life and that he

should have caught the five o'clock train for work, that is, a psychic change should have occurred at the normal age of five, . . . [that is,] the formation of the superego. . . . But here it is, already six-thirty (Gregor is six and a half years old); he has missed the train or psychic energy necessary for progression.³⁸

Kafka could not have known this highly technical, and highly doubtful, theory of development. Even if the theory were true, it simply lacks the power and generality of the Oedipal conflict which might convince us that Kafka could have come by it on his own and that it therefore belongs to the story.

The principle of the postulated author is not sheer invention. We can find it reflected in the practice of a critic like Quentin Skinner, who refuses to read some seventeenth-century legal texts as concerned with the doctrine of the judicial review of statute because the concept of judicial review did not arise until the next century.³⁹ Adams, to cite a clearly literary case, interprets the number three in *The Metamorphosis* as a symbol for masculinity, on the grounds that "Kafka might have learned of the association

through any of several channels" though there is no evidence that he did.⁴⁰ Finally, Miller supports his view that Stevens' rock, in the poem of that title, stands for literal language partly because "Stevens might even have known (why should he not have known?) the world 'curiologic' . . . [from the] Greek *kuriologia*, the use of literal expressions."⁴¹

Now in one sense there is something arbitrary about constructing a historically plausible figure as a text's author. In principle we could always construct a different context and a different author and so give an unhistorical reading. This is not unlike the arbitrariness of our interpreting representational paintings as projections of familiar Euclidean space, since any two-dimensional figure can be construed as the projection of indefinitely many alternative worlds. Just as the effort to construct such worlds could be worth making, we could always try to read a text differently, postulating a different author and progressively refining our conception as new readings come to affect those from which they emerged. Progress in this direction would show a text to be, in a genuine and valuable sense, polysemous. But what we actually find in criticism is a number of self-consciously partial alternatives, directed only at some of the text's features in the expectation that many more partial, non-competing readings will emerge. This can no more support the view that each text, as a whole, has many meanings than can the claim that, given any interpretation of a text, a different one could always be constructed. What we need in both cases is an actual reading at least as general and powerful as the reading whose uniqueness is being questioned and with which it is incompatible.⁴²

The monism I have presented is not threatened by the existence of many partial readings of a text since it can exploit discoveries made through such readings in pursuing a more complete understanding of the text. Methodological pluralism is compatible with a monism of content. The regulative end is to construct, for each text, a complete historically plausible author – a character who may not coincide with the actual writer's self-understanding, fragmentary and incomplete as it probably is. What a writer takes a text to mean is relevant but not telling evidence in literary criticism. Further, our construction will never be complete: in constructing the author

of *The Metamorphosis*, we shall have to consider his close relation, perhaps his identity, with the author of *The Castle*, whose precursor is Kierkegaard (another character who may appear different through this connection) and who is in turn the precursor of Jorge Luis Borges and other future authors. Changes in literature and in everything that is relevant to it (in everything, that is) will change the constraints imposed upon the postulated author. And there is no reason to think that we shall ever abandon this construction, except perhaps that our interest may one day be exhausted.

Critical pluralists sometimes argue as Jones does that all interpretations are necessarily partial, that criticism "is always . . . of a selection of properties" (*Philosophy and the Novel*, p. 193). If different critics were in fact necessarily concerned with different textual features, it might follow that different readings, being nonoverlapping, were equally acceptable.⁴³ But this is no more true than the claim, often made in this connection, that to see a feature differently is to see a different feature.⁴⁴ Like all theorizing, interpretation is based on some features of a text but is of the text as a whole. It is therefore partial only in the trivial sense that no reading can ever account for all of a text's features, not because distinct readings are directed at distinct features. Being partial in this sense means simply that there is no final, unrevisable interpretation of any text; but then why should we want such a reading?

The aim of interpretation is to capture the past in the future: to capture – not to recapture – first, because the iterative prefix suggests that meaning, which was once manifest, must now be found again. But the postulated author dispenses with this assumption. Literary texts are produced by very complicated actions, while the significance of even our simplest acts is often far from clear. Parts of the meaning of a text may become clear only because of developments occurring long after its composition. And though the fact that an author means something may be equivalent to the fact that a writer could have meant it, this is not to say that the writer did, on whatever level, actually mean it.

Second, the notion of recapturing the past suggests the repetition of an earlier act of consciousness and generates the hermeneutic problem of how we can put ourselves in the

position of another epoch or culture, how we can see the world as they saw it, "from within."⁴⁵ Skirting most of the issues, I will simply deny that the aim of criticism is to recreate the original understanding of a text – particularly if by this we mean the experience of an original audience. It is quite true that we can never recreate the experience of the original audience of, say, *The Clouds*. It is not even clear whose experience we should pursue: the common experience of all the spectators of the comedy's first performance? that of an "average" member? the experience of Socrates or of Anytus? It is equally true that we cannot hope to recreate even our contemporaries' experience of a text. And if it is claimed that my experience of *The Clouds* is more similar to yours than it is to Anytus', I will agree only if you can show that our interpretations are more similar. But if this is how we construe "understanding," then capturing the Athenians' understanding of *The Clouds* presents no theoretical difficulties. We must find what they thought, said, and wrote about it. This is in principle public information whose loss, even if it is final, poses no logical or hermeneutical problems.⁴⁶

Still, criticism does not aim to capture what a text's original audience actually took it to mean but to find what the text means. We want to develop an interpretation which will be consistent with what we know about a text's language, its writer, its original audience, its genre, the possibilities of writing, history, psychology, anthropology, and much else. What a text means is what it could mean to its writer. But this is not what it did mean to the writer and to the text's original audience, nor need they have been able to understand it given only the articulated knowledge of human affairs which they then had. The meaning of a text, like the significance of an action, may take forever to become manifest.

Some critics believe that many texts, or parts of texts, have been correctly interpreted once and for all.⁴⁷ This, I have tried to suggest, is unlikely. Others, fearing perhaps that a final interpretation will make the text itself dispensable, deny this possibility on the grounds that all texts are essentially ambiguous and thus always open to new readings.⁴⁸ I have tried to show that we do not need to accept this latter view in order to justify what is, after all, the most basic consequence of the openness of all knowledge.

As I stated earlier, though texts belong to the past, their understanding belongs to the future. To do just what I have said we shouldn't, let me quote, quite out of context, Sidney's "The poet . . . doth grow in effect another nature." Consider this nature not as the world the text represents but as the text itself. Each text is to our many interpretations what nature is to our many theories, and each is inexhaustible. Understanding a text is, in two ways, a historical enterprise: not only does it employ history but it also unfolds in time and depends on everything we now do and will come to know about the world, which includes ourselves. Understanding a text is as easy, or as difficult, as that. In interpreting a text we must come to understand an action, and so we must understand an agent and therefore other actions and other agents as well and what they took for granted, what they meant, believed, and what they wanted. For this reason, each text is inexhaustible: its context is the world.

Notes

- 1 M. H. Abrams, "A Note on Wittgenstein and Literary Criticism," *English Literary History* 41 (Winter 1974): 552.
- 2 These studies are listed and discussed in Stanley Corngold, *The Commentator's Despair: The Interpretation of Kafka's "Metamorphosis"* (Port Washington, NY, and London, 1973); all further references to this work will be included in the text. Many more interpretations of the story have, of course, been offered since.
- 3 Jacques Derrida, for example, forcefully defends this view in *Speech and Phenomena* (Evanston, III., 1973); *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, 1974); and *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, 1976). See also *La Dissémination* (Paris, 1972).
- 4 Derrida, "Signature Event Context," *Glyph* 1 (1977): 185. See also J. Hillis Miller, "The Critic as Host," in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom et al. (New York, 1979), p. 225. In another, brilliant essay, Miller relies heavily on the principle that if an artwork employs certain conventions, then it is also about those conventions ("The Fiction of Realism: Sketches by Boz, Oliver Twist, and Cruickshank's Illustrations," in *Dickens Centennial Essays*, ed. Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius [Berkeley, 1971], pp. 85–153).

- 5 Miller, "Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and the Narrative Line," *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Autumn 1976): 70. See also "Critic as Host," pp. 218–20.
- 6 Miller, "Tradition and Difference," *Diacritics* 2 (1972): 12.
- 7 Miller, "Critic as Host," p. 226. See also Paul de Man, "Nietzsche's Theory of Rhetoric," *Symposium* 28 (Spring 1974): 44, and Geoffrey Hartman, "Literary Criticism and Its Discontents," *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Winter 1976): 205.
- 8 Miller, "Ariadne's Thread," p. 70; cf. "Tradition and Difference," p. 11. The same claim has been made at length by Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," *New Literary History* 6 (Autumn 1974): 5–74. For a criticism of this view, as exhibited in the early work of Nietzsche, see Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York, 1965), pp. 37–47.
- 9 Derrida, "Signature Event Context," p. 181.
- 10 Hartman, "Criticism and Its Discontents," pp. 204–5; all further references to this essay will be included in the text.
- 11 Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY, 1977), pp. 113–38.
- 12 Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (Ithaca, NY, 1975), p. 132. This view, as I suggest below, ultimately derives from New Criticism; see n. 16 below.
- 13 Miller, "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure, II," *Georgia Review* 30 (Summer 1976): 333.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, Conn., 1967), p. 5. On the prescriptive nature of Hirsch's view, see Jack Meiland, "Interpretation as a Cognitive Discipline," *Philosophy and Literature* 2 (Spring 1978): 24–8.
- 16 I. A. Richards, *Interpretation in Teaching* (New York, 1938), p. 256. New Criticism assumed that "words . . . include at least potentially, within their appearance in a given setting, (all) the meanings they have had . . . in previous contexts" (Richard Strier, "The Poetics of Surrender: An Exposition and Critique of New Critical Poetics," *Critical Inquiry* 2 [Autumn 1975]: 173–4). Monroe Beardsley accepts this principle in *The Possibility of Criticism* (Detroit, 1970), pp. 19–20. If so, however, what reason is there to think that the changing meanings of the words of a text will be subject to a single univocal interpretation, as Beardsley believes? It is this monism which deconstruction has abandoned in its claim that words actually possess, in every appearance, all the meanings they have ever had, that every passage does mean "another and an incompatible thing."
- 17 Hirsch, "Three Dimensions of Hermeneutics," *New Literary History* 3 (Winter 1972): 246. Despite some evidence to the contrary (e.g., p. 256), Hirsch generally seems to accept this radical thesis of textual indeterminacy. For considerations weighing against this thesis, see Meiland, "Interpretation" (n. 15 above), pp. 32–3, and Beardsley, *Possibility of Criticism*, pp. 24–6.
- 18 See Hirsch, "Three Dimensions of Hermeneutics," p. 247: "If an ancient text has been interpreted as a Christian allegory, that is unanswerable proof that it can be so interpreted." But is this proof that the text has been *legitimately* so interpreted? Hirsch seems to presuppose that *in some sense* such a reading is accurate to the text; but this seems to beg the question at issue.
- 19 See Abrams, "Note on Wittgenstein"; "Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History: A Reply to Wayne Booth," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (Spring 1976): 447–64, esp. 457; "What's the Use of Theorizing about the Arts?" in *In Search of Literary History*, ed. Morton Bloomfield (Ithaca, NY, 1972), pp. 3–54; and "The Deconstructive Angel," *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Spring 1977): 425–38; Peter Jones, *Philosophy and the Novel* (Oxford, 1975), ch. 5, esp. pp. 182–3; all further references to this book will be included in the text; Meiland, "Interpretation," esp. pp. 29–31 and 35–7; all further references to this essay will be included in the text. See also Quentin Skinner, "Motives, Intentions, and the Interpretation of Texts," *New Literary History* 3 (Winter 1972): 393–408.
- 20 Meiland is, in any case, correct that such agreement as does exist is a sufficient objection to Hirsch's thesis of the radical indeterminacy of textual meaning.
- 21 Meiland is clear on the dependence of textual meaning upon interpretation (see "Interpretation," p. 36), but he thinks that it results simply from the interpretation of physical marks as words and thus attributes to it a privileged status.
- 22 Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore, 1970), p. 248; rpt. in *Writing and Difference*, pp. 278–93. Cf. Miller, "Critic as Host," p. 218: "Is the 'obvious' reading, though, so 'obvious' or even so 'univocal'? . . . Is not the obvious reading perhaps equivocal rather than univocal, most equivocal in its intimate familiarity and in its ability to have got itself taken for granted as 'obvious' and single-voiced?"
- 23 See Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, pp. 244–5, for an elaboration of Derrida's position. The view that no part of the meaning of a text is given, which I have been supporting, bears close affinities to the

approach of Stanley Fish. See, for example, "Interpreting the *Variorum*" (*Critical Inquiry* 2 [Spring 1976]: 473), where Fish attacks "the assumption that there is a sense, that is embedded or encoded in the text, and that can be taken in at a single glance." I diverge from Fish in his inferring that meaning cannot be located in the text but in its readers' experiences. See also his "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 382–427.

- 24 On this point, see Hilary Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," in *Naming, Necessity, and Natural Kinds*, ed. Stephen Schwartz (Ithaca, NY, 1977), pp. 119–32, and "The Meaning of 'Meaning,'" *Mind, Language, and Reality* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 215–72. For a different argument to this conclusion, see Larry Laudan, *Progress and Its Problems* (Berkeley, 1977), p. 141ff.
- 25 Heinz Politzer, *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox* (Ithaca, NY, 1966), p. 72; Robert M. Adams, *Strains of Discord: Studies in Literary Openness* (Ithaca, NY, 1958), p. 152; Hellmuth Kaiser, "Kafka's Fantasy of Punishment," Peter Dow Webster, "Franz Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' as Death and Resurrection Fantasy," and Corngold, "Metamorphosis of the Metaphor," in *The Metamorphosis*, trans. and ed. Corngold (New York, 1972), pp. 153, 158, and 11, respectively. I quote from Corngold's translation.
- 26 Wayne Booth deals with issues generated by methodological pluralism in *Critical Understanding* (Chicago, 1979), but his discussion, especially pp. 284–301, extends to pluralism of contents.
- 27 For the Marxist argument, see Bluma Goldstein, "Bachelors and Work: Social and Economic Conditions in 'The Judgment,' 'The Metamorphosis' and *The Trial*," in *The Kafka Debate*, ed. Angel Flores (New York, 1977), pp. 147–75 and 3–5. For the Freudian view, see Kaiser, "Kafka's Fantasy of Punishment," esp. p. 152.
- 28 Monroe Beardsley makes a similar point in his review of Booth's *Critical Understanding* in *Philosophy and Literature* 4 (Fall 1980): 257–65.
- 29 Miller, "Critic as Host," p. 224.
- 30 Stanley Cavell provides an excellent discussion of this issue in "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York, 1969), p. 74ff.
- 31 Putnam discusses such a view in relation to the philosophy of science and epistemology in "Realism and Reason," *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London, 1978), pp. 123–40.
- 32 The first view is held by Skinner, "Motives," pp. 401–2. For the perlocution view, see Meiland, "Interpretation," p. 39ff, and Skinner, "Motives," p. 403. For the meaning-as-message view, see, e.g., Richard Kuhns, "Criticism and the Problem of Intention," *Journal of Philosophy* 57 (January 1960): for Kuhns, interpretation is the activity of "getting at the message which may go beyond the plain literal sense" (p. 7). The notion of meaning as message has recently been criticized by Wolfgang Iser in *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore, 1978), though he seems to me to conclude too quickly that meaning is "imagistic in character" (p. 8).
- 33 This is one of the central theses in Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis, 1968), though Goodman avoids any discussion of intention.
- 34 See W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington, Ky., 1954), for the source of most of those arguments. Cavell ("A Matter of Meaning It," *Must We Mean What We Say?*, pp. 234–7) disagrees with Beardsley but offers a different account of intention.
- 35 This position may seem to transgress against the original New Criticism, structuralism (e.g., Roland Barthes, *Sur Racine* [Paris, 1963]), more recent theory sympathetic to the New Critics (e.g., John Ellis, *The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis* [Berkeley, 1974]), deconstruction, and approaches to interpretation via the activity of reading (e.g., Iser, *The Act of Reading*, and Fish, "Literature in the Reader" [n. 23 above]).
- 36 My postulated author is not unrelated to Booth's "implied author," to whom he appeals both in *Critical Understanding* and in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, 1961), and to Kendall Walton's "apparent artist," discussed in his "Style and the Products and Processes of Art," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 45–66. I discuss this issue in more detail in another paper, "What an Author Is" (to be presented at the MLA convention, December 1981).
- 37 Beardsley argues that we can attribute such meanings to texts; see *Possibility of Criticism*, p. 19.
- 38 Webster, "Metamorphosis" as Death and Resurrection Fantasy" (n. 25 above), pp. 161–2.
- 39 Skinner, "Motives," pp. 406–7 and n. 41.
- 40 Adams, *Strains of Discord* (n. 25 above), p. 173.
- 41 Miller, "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure," *Georgia Review* 30 (Spring 1976): 10.
- 42 Booth makes a similar point in more detail in *Critical Understanding*, pp. 168–9.
- 43 Though, strictly speaking, what would follow is that distinct parts of a text have distinct meanings, not that the text *as a whole* has more than one meaning.

- 44 Jones sometimes suggests this with his notion of the "interpreted-text"; see *Philosophy and the Novel*, p. 193.
- 45 For a discussion of problems connected with the hermeneutic circle, see Anthony Savile, "Historicity and the Hermeneutic Circle," *New Literary History* 10 (Autumn 1978): 49–70, and "Tradition and Interpretation," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36 (Spring 1978): 303 and 315.
- 46 If it is now argued that even if we had the Athenians' interpretation, we could never really understand it, we can again apply the previous dilemma. We cannot understand their views because we cannot experience things as they did (which applies to any communication whatever) or because we lack background knowledge which they possessed (and which raises no problems in principle).
- 47 See Savile, "Tradition and Interpretation," p. 307; Abrams, "Rationality and Imagination" (n. 19 above), p. 457; and Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, p. 171.
- 48 Iser, for example, seems to think that the dispensability of the text is a danger which taking meaning as "imagistic" avoids; see *The Act of Reading*, p. 4ff. But this fear is widespread; see Cavell's discussion of Cleanth Brooks and Yvor Winters on paraphrase in "Aesthetic Problems." Claims to the effect that what is important about literary texts is not what they mean but their "emotional impact" are prompted by such a fear.

Artistic Value and Opportunistic Moralism

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Paradoxical as it may seem, the only relevant qualities in a work of art, judged as art, are artistic qualities: judged as a means to good, no other qualities are worth considering; for there are no qualities of greater moral value than artistic qualities, since there is no greater means to good than art.

(Bell 1915: 117).

Clive Bell here introduces us, first, to the expected autonomist distinction between judging art as art and judging it on moral grounds or, in Bell's conception, as a means to good. And he holds that the moral judgment of art is not relevant to judging art as art. But even he cannot resist building a bridge between moral and artistic value, as he asserts that the artistic judgment is relevant to the moral judgment of art, and that the artistic qualities of a work indeed have a kind of exhaustive relevance in determining its moral value. "To pronounce anything a work of art is, therefore, to make a momentous moral judgment" (Bell 1915: 115). Now, in nearly every way I disagree with Bell: I do not think of moral

value in the terms of G. E. Moore, as Bell does, and one of my primary goals is to dispute the conception of judging art as art that Bell promotes. But the idea of the autonomist who is so confident that art as art has moral value is suggestive for my project. It suggests the difficulty of maintaining full separation or mutual autonomy of moral and artistic value, and it affirms a kind of global moral judgment of art that harkens back to Plato. Though I will not affirm precisely that kind of global moral judgment, I will argue for a moral evaluation of art that is similarly ambitious in scope.

Generally, does the moral significance of works of art systematically add to or detract from their value of art? My basic answer is "No": moral significance does not systematically affect the value of art. A work that affirms moral truth can be artistically excellent, partly in virtue of its moral content, but a work that rejects moral truth can also be artistically excellent, in part because of its moral content. In this respect I endorse Daniel Jacobson's arguments against views such as Berys Gaut's that take morally commendable significance to count systematically in favor of a work's artistic value. I discuss some examples that I hope will lend support to Jacobson's claim that art can be artistically valuable in virtue of morally flawed content.

I then complicate this basic answer by considering what I think of as a statistically significant

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trend in the evaluation of art. The trend I assume is that, of the works of art that have moral significance, the works we tend to value *most highly* are ones that are in sympathy with the moral views we actually accept. We may value works whose moral commitments we condemn as truly excellent works of art, but I think these works are unlikely to show up on our lists of the most precious works of art, the ones we would most hope would survive as evidence of human artistic achievement. I have not done the empirical work needed to confirm the real existence of this trend, so its existence is open to challenge, but the evidence I have – of past practices of canonizing “masterpieces” and of anecdotal experience of works that people prize most highly – supports it, and I will proceed on the assumption that this evidence is representative.

One might explain this tendency in a way that had no bearing on the relation between moral truth and aesthetic value. Perhaps there simply are many more works conveying moral truth than moral error, so that works we find morally sympathetic have a statistically greater chance of showing up on “most valuable” lists. Or perhaps social pressures operate to ensure that our artistic preferences conform to our moral convictions. Those factors and others may indeed have explanatory power here, but I want to try out the idea that artistic evaluation makes room for prioritization of the moral, even while there is no systematic theory of the relation between moral and artistic value, as Jacobson argues. I call the view that allows for this prioritization “opportunistic moralism.” I believe this view is true to the antitheoretical spirit, in the sense that it does not assume from the outset any particular relation between moral and aesthetic value. But it allows for the value of art to reflect the pervasive, though contingent, importance of moral truth within human life. Arguing for opportunistic moralism will require thinking about the notion of artistic value. What artistic value is, such that moral value is or is not relevant to it, needs more attention in the current debate.

Moral Flaws and Artistic Value

Let us begin by looking at how several theorists have argued, contra Bell, that moral value is

relevant to artistic value. The category of narrative art, art that tells a story, has been the focus of attention. Noël Carroll argues, in defending a view he calls “moderate moralism,” that

the bottom line, aesthetically speaking, with respect to narrative artworks is that we are supposed to be absorbed by them. ... But if it is the purpose of the narrative artwork to absorb the audience, to draw us into the story, to capture our interest, to engage our emotions, and to stimulate our imaginations, then it should be obvious that by engaging moral judgments and emotions, the author may acquit her primary purpose by secondarily activating and sometimes deepening the moral understanding of the audience (Carroll 1996: 235).

And with respect to the success of a work, “Securing the right moral response of the audience is as much a part of the design of a narrative artwork as structural components like plot complications. Failure to elicit the right moral response, then, is a failure in the design of the work, and therefore, is an aesthetic failure” (Carroll 1996: 233).

Carroll is pointing out that moral assessment is built into the project of many works of art, so that appreciating such works asks us to recognize the moral values and claims implicitly endorsed by the work and to endorse them and feel in sympathy with them ourselves. There is a scene in Jane Austen’s novel *Emma* in which the heroine, Emma, says something cruel to Miss Bates, an older, impoverished woman who is a socially vulnerable target. Experiencing that as an excruciating moment – judging Emma’s words to be cruel, feeling shame on Emma’s behalf, and wincing at the effect on Miss Bates – are all responses that are integral to engaging with this work as it was designed. If the novel succeeds in “activating” all of these responses, because the novel’s moral “take” on the scene agrees with ours, then in Carroll’s view we can count the moral worth of the novel as an artistic virtue.

Along similar lines, Berys Gaut’s “ethicism” argues that a work of art “manifests” its ethical or moral attitudes by prescribing moral responses in its audience (Gaut 1998). For instance, it has been argued that *Huckleberry Finn* manifests racist attitudes by calling for readers to be amused by

Huck's and Tom Sawyer's treatment of Jim (Booth 1988: 465–7). Gaut argues that, "If a work prescribes a response that is unmerited, it has failed in an aim internal to it, and that is a defect" (Gaut 1998: 194). Specifically, "If these responses are unmerited, because unethical, we have reason not to respond in the way prescribed. ... What responses the work prescribes is of aesthetic relevance" (Gaut 1998: 195). So, in Gaut's view, if a work prescribes morally virtuous responses, those responses are merited because they are morally virtuous, and meriting the responses it asks for counts in favor of the artistic value of the work. But if, on the other hand, as is claimed with *Huckleberry Finn*, the work prescribes an unethical response, that response is thereby unmerited, showing the work to fail in one of its internal aims, and so counts against its artistic value.

Gaut's argument is problematic, as others have noted (Carroll 2000: 375–6, Jacobson 1997: 177–8). Gaut seems to equivocate between notions of merited response: the response that is merited by how the artwork presents a situation and the response merited by an independent moral assessment of that situation. These responses may or may not be the same, but it seems that only the first kind of merit – whether the response is merited by what the work offers – is obviously relevant to artistic value in Gaut's sense. It would be begging the question to say that just because a response is immoral it could not be merited by what we find in the work of art.

I assume that Gaut and Carroll share an intuition that motivates their theoretical goals of integrating moral value into artistic value. They want their theories to account for the fact that they do in fact hold a work's morally flawed commitments against it as a work of art. In Gaut's case this leads to a *pro tanto* theory: a morally flawed work may still be very good, but its moral flaw counts to that extent against its value. In Carroll's case, as Carroll and Jacobson point out, the resulting theory does not officially rule out the contrary possibility of counting a work's moral flaws in favor of its artistic value: Carroll most centrally wants to establish that "sometimes" moral virtues and flaws are, respectively, artistic virtues and flaws (Carroll 2000: 377–8). But Carroll doubts the existence of works in which moral flaws counts as artistic virtues: "Few, if any, examples come to mind" (Carroll 2000: 380). I too often count a work's

morally flawed commitments against its artistic value, but not always. The examples below are intended to suggest how experiences with narrative art might lead one not to share the moralists' motivating intuitions. These examples thus follow up on the argument made by Jacobson, in his "In Praise of Immoral Art," to the effect that moral defects can be aesthetic *merits* in a work of art (Jacobson 1997).

First consider Ernest Hemingway's story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." The story concerns a man, Francis Macomber, who initially humiliates himself on a safari by running from a lion, and who as a result is scorned by his unpleasant, unfaithful wife and by the hunting guide (with whom the wife is unfaithful). The man finally redeems himself, however, through a courageous confrontation with a buffalo. After this moment of triumph and happiness, he dies. The moment of triumph is shown as having transformative effects on how the others see him: his wife realizes her contempt for him cannot be maintained – the balance of power in their marriage will change, and the guide reflects later that Macomber had finally grown up and become a man. I take the title of the work to be sincere: in this fictional world, these events really were a test of Macomber's worth, and he passed the test. He thus had an ultimately happy life and legitimately earned the others' respect.

Now, I do not accept either that running from a lion is truly humiliating or that confronting an angry buffalo is a genuine test of human worth. More generally, I do not see overcoming fear of this sort as crucially relevant to whether people have come into their own as persons and deserve respect. So I do not accept the moral framework that I see as supporting the whole drama of the story. But I really enjoy this work – as far as I'm concerned it is an excellent story. And I agree with Jacobson that, in a work of this type, it wouldn't make sense to say that it would be even better if it did not have this moral flaw; it just wouldn't be this story at all if it didn't celebrate precisely what it celebrates (Jacobson 1997: 182). The story needs its wrong-headed moral framework to be the excellent story that it is.

A second example: I have read Henry James's novel *The Portrait of a Lady* twice, once probably in my late teens and once in my mid-30s. The two readings elicited different responses to a morally

crucial aspect of the novel: the heroine, Isabel Archer, has a nightmarishly terrible marriage, pervaded with deceit, manipulation, and unstinting efforts to break her will. At the end of the novel, she has a chance to leave this marriage and seek happiness, but she does not leave. In both readings I understood that within the novel this choice of fidelity and endurance made moral sense and was endorsed by the work. The first time around I also felt fairly strong distaste for her choice: I wished she could be a bit less dedicated to principle, a bit more lighthearted. The second time around I understood the rightness of her choice within the story more fully. I admired it, seeing her as accepting a moral challenge and taking charge of the meaningfulness of her life. But both times her choice struck me as deeply at odds with what we owe to someone else and what we owe to a vow made on the basis of deceit and manipulation. So I have a pretty sharp disagreement with one of the important moral attitudes manifested in the novel. It is a terrific novel, however, and, as with the Hemingway story, I don't see how I could count the fact of Isabel's choice and the embedded evaluation of that choice as a flaw, in the sense of being a failure of the novel on its own terms. In the second reading, I would say I came to appreciate the merit of her choice within the world constructed by the novel. But I doubt I ever had the approving emotional and moral responses that Gaut and Carroll might say the novel calls for, since I never endorsed her choice.

Finally, let's briefly consider two examples from the world of film, *Trainspotting* and *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. I take *Trainspotting* as an effort to represent a world in which a morally meaningful life is not possible. People move in an opportunistic way from one bleak and unprincipled set of habits or addictions to another, for example, from heroin addiction to middle-class consumerism. While one set of habits may be more viscerally revolting than another, it is not clear that in this world there are moral distinctions to be made between the different lives people lead. I appreciated this movie *because* it dismisses the moral commitments that I think indeed matter, and because it finds a way to convey what it might be like to live, form desires, and make choices within such an amoral world. The movie is also self-conscious about rejecting moral

commitments (the characters, for instance, joke about whether knowing a lot about Sean Connery is a substitute for having moral fiber), so it asks to be treated differently than the Hemingway story or James's novel. The movie directly engages with the issue of how it may conflict with its audience's settled habits of moral response.

There is a different brand of amorality in the film *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (and perhaps an even purer form of it in the Patricia Highsmith novel on which it is based), since in this fictional world it seems not so much that moral discernment isn't possible, but that it's not very interesting or important. The morally atrocious behavior of Ripley is portrayed at a somewhat flat psychological level: he kills people sometimes when they interfere with his desires, and he takes over another person's identity when it is a really attractive identity and he is capable of doing so. The audience's emotional responses are steered toward suspense and tension over whether Ripley will pull off his outrageously intrusive and deceptive behavior. The film's deprioritization of the moral is clearly one of the things it aims for, so it seems that to judge it as successful on its own terms we would have to count its ability to inhibit moral judgment in favor of the work. And I do count that in its favor: it is unsettling but interestingly unsettling to be worrying more about how the murderer will juggle all his deceptive schemes than about condemning his moral character.

The first point I hope to establish with these examples is that a work of art can be valued as art partly on the basis of its morally flawed commitments. Those commitments can be integral to the design of the work, to what it aims for on its own terms. If we think it works well with those commitments, I think we have to grant that the moral flaw is essential to the value of the work. It would not make the work better to remove the moral flaw, but would rather destroy the work. Gaut notes that his type of *pro tanto* moralist need not deny in such cases that removing the moral flaw would make the work worse. This kind of moralist can grant that a moral flaw may be intertwined with a work's artistic virtues in such a way that removing the moral flaw would remove those virtues as well and hence leave the work worse off (Gaut 2001: 346–8). Gaut here is interpreting the claim that the moral flaw is integral to the success of the work in terms of “nonremovability”: the

flaw cannot be removed without lessening the work's value. But I mean to make a claim for the flaw's positive value, as I assume Jacobson does as well. Seeing the moral flaw as part of the success of the work means that the moral flaw is pulling its weight along with the work's other virtues – it is not just a drag on the positive contributions of other features.

How could a moral flaw pull its weight in this way? A moral flaw contributes positively in precisely the ways we would usually say that morally commendable content does: the flawed content can show the meaning of events within the story; it can help one to understand characters' motivations, strengths, and weaknesses; and in general it can be one of the things one finds interesting and important in the work. Could moral evaluators like Gaut reply that the flawed content only appears to do these things? Once we confront it as mistaken, does such content lose its ability to support the meaning and interest of the narrative? Maybe it often will, but in those cases it is not the sheer mistakenness of the content that is the problem; such works fail to give us enough of a sense of how to work thoughtfully within the moral framework we reject. With regard to James's novel, the reader can get a sense of how to think of the marriage vow such that it would have a moral claim on someone even within a vile marriage. One can also see from the novel how Isabel's return to her marriage offers her a substantial, challenging, and even constructive new project in her life.

This line of thought echoes claims made by Karen Hanson, as she views a work of excellent but morally deplorable art as having the capacity to present morally deplorable ideas with cogency and to make us "understand how they fit together ... and the relative force of the case this work makes for them." If a work thus provides "cogent thought and genuine deliberation," albeit in the service of deplorable ideas, the work has forms of power and grace that count as moral, intellectual, and artistic virtues (Hanson 1998: 221). Similarly, Matthew Kieran emphasizes the value of a work developing thick imaginative understanding, understanding that takes us beyond a superficial level (Kieran 1995, 1996). I have not given real evidence that James's novel, for instance, provides this kind of cogency, deliberation, and understanding, but that is what I would hope to do in

an extended treatment. The moral flaw in an excellent work will not seem arbitrary, confused, or easily dismissable within the web of events, reasons, ideas, and feelings summoned up by that work.

Kieran has recently given a further argument for the claim that a work offering immoral experiences can be artistically valuable on those grounds (Kieran 2003). On this view, we need to understand the sources and meaning of immoral views, actions, and dispositions, in order to achieve full understanding and appreciation of moral goodness. If this cognitive need is served by experiencing a work of art – if the work makes an aspect of immorality experientially accessible and intelligible, then the immoral content of the work adds to the cognitive and artistic value of the work. Note that this "cognitive immoralism" is immoralism in the service of knowledge, both psychological and moral. A commitment to moral and psychological truth sets up the need for understanding of immorality, so perhaps this view does not grant the possibility of immoral art having value independent of our quest for moral knowledge. I will return to discuss the relation between Kieran's and my views below.

Perhaps, as Jacobson and I state that a moral flaw can be an artistic merit, while Gaut states that it cannot and Carroll doubts that it could, there is an intractable difference of taste in play. But I doubt that anyone is willing to leave matters at that level of disagreement – it seems as though there is something we can fruitfully argue about here. I want to push the burden of argument toward those who think a moral flaw cannot contribute positively to a work. I hope some of the examples sketched above are suggestive for this purpose. Why can't *Trainspotting* be valuable because it brings to life a depressing leveling of human aspirations, or Ripley because it shows disrespect for comfortable habits of moral condemnation? In general, there are many ways in which a story can be morally off-target, and it just seems likely that there would also be many ways to work well with those off-target moral sensibilities. It seems unreasonable to assume that artists working with divergent sensibilities, ones that at least some people would condemn, cannot work well with the moral values, concepts, and principles they endorse.

Accommodating Nonprescribed Responses

The second point I want to make, in light of the examples discussed above, involves challenging the “mismatched response principle” that Gaut, Carroll, and Jacobson share. Perhaps Jacobson’s commitment to it is less central, but he says in his chapter in this volume, “Surely there is something to the thought that this sort of disparity between the responses a work prescribes and those it elicits is an aesthetic failure” ([Jacobson 2006:] 347). This principle applies best to artworks that fall into familiar genre categories, where, for one thing, it is clear what responses are called for (Jacobson 1997: 167). I think there is often a much more complicated and evaluatively inconclusive relationship between the responses a work calls for and the responses it actually gets or would get from some sort of ideal audience. It often does not seem necessary for the success of a work that our responses match up with morally relevant responses prescribed by the work. Maybe this could be because a work does not prescribe such responses at all or prescribes conflicting responses. But I assume that Gaut and Carroll would say that such a work then does not manifest moral attitudes or commitments – calling for such responses is in their view just what it means for a work to manifest a moral attitude and hence to be evaluable on the basis of moral content. So for present purposes I will grant that any work that has moral commitments prescribes moral responses, but I want to read that prescription in a minimal sense. The work in some way sanctions or gives its blessing to certain responses. It makes certain moral evaluations the right ones with respect to the narrative. Even then, it does not obviously follow that provoking those responses, in us or in a morally ideal audience, is necessary for the full success of the work.

Rather, it seems most crucial that we recognize what the sanctioned moral responses are, where that can be a relatively intellectual kind of recognition. With “Francis Macomber” and *Portrait of a Lady*, it certainly matters that the reader understand what the work assumes is morally important. And probably some kind of feeling responses have to deepen and reinforce that understanding, and lend our responses the evaluative nuances that can be captured in feel-

ing. But it seems enough of an artistic achievement if those feelings track and react thoughtfully to the moral nature of the work, while perhaps running along a “track” that is not sanctioned by the work. I think my initial strong distaste for Isabel Archer’s choice, as well as my later rather grudging admiration for it, are both perfectly good reactions for James’s work to provoke, meaning they are within the ballpark of responses that show the work succeeding in its aims. In each case the novel conveyed to me the moral significance of her choice, I found that significance to be coherent in relation to the work as a whole, and I found its moral significance to be interesting enough to react strongly to it. I think the novel could be a great novel even if that distaste or admiration were how morally ideal audiences would respond. With respect to the Hemingway story, for it to succeed a reader certainly has to feel the dramatic dynamic of the story, and that involves such things as feeling excitement and perhaps a sense of vicarious triumph when Macomber confronts the buffalo, and satisfaction when his wife has her rude awakening. But how morally deep do those responses have to be? Maybe I do endorse the story’s vision of human fulfillment while feeling Macomber’s triumph, or maybe I *try out* endorsing it, or maybe I have the dramatic responses in some way that lacks moral direction or commitment of any kind. We should consider more of the possibilities for appropriate response, ones that do not require us to be fully in sync with the story’s prescriptions. Our responses should show that we grasp whatever counts as morally important within the narrative, but not necessarily that we judge and feel in the way deemed appropriate by the work.

The Contingency of Moral Value as Artistic Value

So far I have argued that neither a negative moral assessment of a work of art, nor responses that diverge from those sanctioned by the work, need interfere with the work succeeding on its own terms. I have worked with the assumption that, if we were to prove that moral value is relevant to artistic value, we would have to do so by showing that moral evaluation is relevant to the work’s internal aims. Carroll makes this assumption

particularly clear, as he speaks of aesthetic error as a work's failure "on its own terms, which is to say in terms of its own aesthetic aims" (Carroll 1996: 233), and he objects, for instance, to the idea of praising *Triumph of the Will* "for a use by us that it was never designed to serve" (Carroll 2000: 381). Our praise and criticism of art need to respond to the aims and design of art. This seems reasonable. Isn't that how we evaluate everything? We evaluate snow shovels based on the aims of snow shovels, and mailboxes in light of the aims of mailboxes. It wouldn't be fair to critique a mailbox because it wasn't a good snow shovel. So if a work of art doesn't have moral goals built into its aims as art, wouldn't it be inappropriate to evaluate it on moral terms? Gaut and Carroll thus argue for artistic failures that result from works not being able to achieve the moral responses they are designed to achieve.

However, this conception of artistic value as being set by a work on its own terms seems too impoverished. We can acknowledge that evaluation of art as art requires knowing how the work "conceives of itself" and what it aims for on its own terms, but that does not rule out evaluating it as art on other terms. We do this all the time, as we may evaluate a work partly by comparing it to other works that set somewhat different terms for themselves. For instance, early 1930s movie musicals with lavish production numbers look stilted and boring compared to slightly later Astaire and Rogers musicals. The earlier ones were not aiming to be casual, witty, and lighthearted in the same way, but we can still fault them for being more stilted and boring. Or consider how Casey Haskins discusses criticism of the film *Life Is Beautiful* as illustrating critics' use of evaluative standards that the film was not aiming to meet (Haskins 2001).

The acceptability of introducing perhaps unforeseen terms of evaluation for art seems in fact to be one of the things that is distinctive about art and artistic value. Works of art are not just like mailboxes with respect to evaluation. This is in part because the internal aims of works of art can be much more loosely constrained than the aims of a mailbox. There is some openness or lack of finality built into the horizon of possibilities for art: we do not assume we know in advance all there is to know about the sorts of intentions that can be realized, or how the resources of the

artistic medium can be used, or what kind of expectations and interpretative practices an audience can bring to bear. This is related to a point Hanson makes in urging caution about judging the value of an experience "on its own terms," as she notes that "it is the character of those terms ... that is precisely what is often in dispute" (Hanson 1998: 219). In general, it seems that the project a work sets for itself can assume from the outset some expansiveness or innovation in the terms on which it is to be evaluated.

More broadly, though, I think that art is distinctive in that it is not content to be evaluated on its own terms, even in the more expansive sense just gestured at. It sets some terms and wants to satisfy them, but it also seeks some kind of larger, less circumscribed preciousness. By saying that art is not "content" with certain limited kinds of evaluation and "seeks" something further, I am not trying to animate art. I just mean that in our practices of evaluating art we have come to treat it as the sort of thing that rightly aims for this further preciousness. Works of art are sometimes compared to people in their uniqueness, and although I do not think art can have the value a person can have, I think there is something structurally similar in the ways a person or an artwork asks to be valued. As people, whatever the evaluative standards we actively strive to meet (trying to be more tidy, or more generous, or trying to pollute less), we are open to evaluation on criteria that we don't necessarily acknowledge or even understand. I assume that most adults have had moments of revelation of this sort: I come to see how I am failing in something I didn't even know I should have been trying to do, and I generally can't dismiss it by noting that, well, I wasn't trying to do that. We want to be valued roughly as decent members of the human race, people it was better rather than worse to have had around for a while, and that leaves us open to evaluation on a pretty unmanageable number of criteria.

In a structurally similar way, I think we pose the question of whether a work of art, whatever it may achieve on the terms it set for itself, earns a place in human life. This means that, even if greatness as a "witty, romantic, tap-dancing concoction" is exactly what a work aimed for *and* what it achieved, that does not after all make it inappropriate to assess it on other terms that it may not acknowledge or foresee. Is it worth

having such concoctions? Can this object justify having a place in human experience? (And I'm not suggesting that tap-dancing concoctions cannot in fact justify their existence.)

So the idea is that there is an invitation built into the experience of art, inviting us to ask whether the work is worth having at all. We can do this sort of evaluation of a mailbox too ("why should we accommodate the delivery of mail anyway?"), but that kind of grandiose evaluation of the functional object changes the subject, takes the focus away from the virtues and vices of that mailbox to the value of the function it serves. I don't think that asking the similar question of a work of art takes the focus away from that work; it is still a question we could hope to answer by pointing out what is satisfying or not in the encounter with that work. But why include this in the "artistic value" of art? Why not call it the "all things considered" value of art, where that is something different from, bigger than, its artistic value? Basically, I do not know how to conceive of artistic value except by thinking about what seems characteristic of evaluation of art. And I think art evaluation has this distinctive character: it both takes into account explicitly aimed-for achievements and failures and spills out into something more like a justification of existence. That is the kind of terribly ambitious evaluative scope that matters to art. It seems unjustified to cordon off evaluations of how well works of art fare in this sense, as not being relevant to their value as art, if this is indeed characteristic of the value we seek in art. Let me note that the explicitly aimed-for aspects of the work are crucially relevant to the broader justification of existence. We ask whether something that achieves and fails at the particular things the work aimed for has justified its place in the world. Was it worth using the resources used by this work in this particular way? This conception of artistic value is thus distinguished from "all things considered" value, which could include such things as a work's value in stopping a bullet or its value in undermining a political movement, where those would often not be things a work of art aimed for on its own terms.

At this point the issue of moral value in art returns. I am not arguing that giving art this ambitious project automatically makes moral value central to artistic value. But I am supposing that art is in some sense an opportunist: it seizes

on whatever it can in order to make itself matter to us in this larger way. If so, then seeking to convey and articulate moral truth will often be a good opportunistic choice. We happen to need to have moral matters explored and presented accurately, and we often take great satisfaction in that process as well. Presenting moral truth is thus a promising thing for a work of art to do, if it is to be valued as worth having around. Returning to Hemingway, I think he wrote an excellent story. But I will never value "Francis Macomber" as much as some other stories, including Hemingway stories, which deal well with moral challenges that I see as really weighing on us. The context for evaluation of art, in this sense, is a rich one that takes into account moral and nonmoral needs, problems, attachments, and aspirations of human beings. Kieran says, "Our evaluation of an artwork not only constitutes a judgment upon the work as art, it also substantially reflects our own concerns, goals, values, and imaginative appreciation of the world" (Kieran 1996: 348). I am not sure if Kieran is here isolating evaluation of art as art from the evaluation of art that reflects this rich context of human concerns, goals, and so on. Like Carroll, he speaks of what art aims at *qua* art, and perhaps he means to affirm the narrower notion of artistic value that is dominant in the current debate. But perhaps Kieran includes, as part of what art aims at *qua* art, the standing aim of justifying its existence as worthwhile in light of human needs and concerns. In that case our views would be very close. It seems easier to be a cognitivist, as Kieran is, and to argue for the artistic relevance of cognitive value at this rather grand level of evaluation, rather than in terms of an artwork's success "on its own terms." So I think Kieran's commitment to cognitivism should lead him to embrace this level of evaluation as properly artistic.

From the perspective of opportunistic moralism, there is no clear distinction between artistic evaluation of art and what Jacobson here calls "humanist criticism" of art. The humanist critic evaluates art in terms of its ability to serve important ethical functions, emphasizing its value as a vehicle of moral education. As long as such evaluations appeal to how a work of art uses artistic resources, the humanist praise or censure fits right into a process of artistic evaluation. If serving the humanist functions of education and

cultivation of desire and perception turns out to justify a work's use of artistic resources, then those forms of humanist value would count directly toward a work's artistic value.

Let me conclude by making a few more points about what it means to think about art as an opportunistic moralist. To allow moral evaluation to contribute quite powerfully to the evaluation of art, even if a work does not aim to have moral significance and even if a work succeeds beautifully on its own no-moral terms, means being more of an old-fashioned moralist than either Gaut or Carroll. Is it so old-fashioned that it returns us to Plato's style of moralism, in which moral value appears to serve as art's primary "reason for being"? I see several related reasons why this view does not amount to a return to Plato's moralism. First, the fact that moral evaluation of art may take priority does not mean that art cannot justify its existence through realizing many other sorts of value; moral value has many competitors with respect to what can make art precious to us, such as humor, psychological insight, innovation, and sensory delight. Second, whether moral value does in fact trump various other kinds of value in the evaluation of art is a contingent matter. I take it that Plato condemned art that was morally flawed because it was morally flawed, so in his view the evaluative contribution of moral content was fixed by its very moral nature. In contrast, I am arguing that moral value is valuable in art because people care about moral value. Although the fact that we care about moral value runs extremely deep, I would say that its value is still a contingent matter, and its value in art hinges on art's need to provide something precious to us. If something other than morality became a more central preoccupation for us, that other thing could outweigh moral truth as a source of value in art. If we were, for instance, transformed into a community of perfect and perfectly invulnerable moral saints, I am not sure that moral value in art would matter at all. We

might find it boring and useless. Third, on this view, even for people for whom morality is the central preoccupation, and who are quite far from being moral saints, it is not fixed in advance that moral *truth* count as a dominant source of preciousness. This view does not rule out the possibility of immoral art being the most valuable art.

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Emotions in the Music

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There has been a growing consensus among philosophers of music that, contrary to the skeptical claims of Hanslick, it makes perfect sense to describe music in expressive terms, and that, again contrary to Hanslick's skeptical claims, there is more or less general agreement, among qualified listeners, as to what the music is expressive of, in any given instance, if, that is, it is expressive of anything (which need not necessarily be the case). More specifically, there has been a growing consensus that music can be, and often is, expressive of the garden-variety emotions, such as sorrow, joy, fear, hope, and a few other basic emotions like these.

As well, the consensus generally is that, when we say a passage of music is sorrowful, or fearful, or the like, we are not describing a disposition of the music to arouse such an emotion in us, but ascribing such an emotion, as a perceived property to the music itself. This way in which the musical emotions are perceived, as, rather, in the music, than in us, with the music as their cause, was well captured by the late American philoso-

pher O. K. Bouwsma, when he quipped that the emotion is more like the redness to the apple than like the burp to the cider.

But this view, though initially appealing, is not without its problems, the most discussed of which is *how* the emotion can be *in* the music. We all understand how an emotion can be 'in' something as a 'disposition.' Sad news is news that makes people sad: the sadness is in the news merely in the sense of a tendency of such news to sadden people. There is no 'metaphysical' problem there: that is, no problem about the nature of the property we are ascribing to the news.

Likewise, we all understand quite well what we are saying when we assert that a person is sad: the sadness is a conscious state of that person; that feeling of depression and lassitude one experiences upon losing a loved one or suffering a great disappointment. Again, there is no 'metaphysical' problem about how a person can possess the 'property' of sadness; what its mode of existence is. Sadness is a conscious state and persons are capable of having conscious states.

But music is not capable of being in conscious states (needless to say), so it can't possess sadness in *that* way. And, since it is the consensus that it doesn't possess the thing as a disposition to make us sad, or, as we have seen, as a representational

property that is, as a representation of sadness, how exactly *does* it – the music – possess the sadness? It is all very well to say, with Bouwsma, that it is as the redness to the apple rather than the burp to the cider. However, that does not really answer our question. For, although we have a pretty good idea of how redness ‘inheres’ in apples and other red things, what we *don’t* have is a pretty good idea of how the emotions ‘inhere’ in the music. Indeed, some people think we don’t have any idea at all.

One of the traditional ways philosophers have of dealing with such cases is to try to make an analogy between the problematic case and an unproblematic one that it relevantly resembles. In the present instance, what might make us less uncomfortable with the notion of emotions ‘inhering’ in music as perceptual properties would be to discover cases in our ordinary experience where we commonly accept as a matter of course the notion of perceptual emotive properties belonging to non-sentient ‘objects.’

Such a general argument was advanced by the remarkable American philosopher Charles Hartshorne in his highly original book *The Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation* (1934), many years before the problem emerged decisively for contemporary philosophy of music. Hartshorne adduced the common phenomenon of the emotive tone of colors to illustrate the point that emotions can be part of our perceptual field in perfectly ordinary circumstances well known to us all. Thus, he pointed out, yellow is a ‘cheerful’ color, not because it makes us cheerful but because its cheerfulness just is a part of its perceived quality, inseparable from its yellowness. That’s just how we perceive yellow. In the same vein, he instanced other colors, as well as sounds, and other visual aspects of our world. In so doing, Hartshorne drew our attention to the fact that music is not alone in possessing for us emotions as perceived qualities of our sensible experience. The phenomenon is ubiquitous to our perceptual world. It should make us less uncomfortable, then, with the phenomenon in music if we realize that it is not merely a *musical* phenomenon but a phenomenon of human perceptual experience in general.

Nevertheless, the skeptical may reply, the problem of how emotions can be possessed by music, as perceptual qualities, has hardly been

solved by discovering that objects other than music possess them. Indeed, it could be argued that the problem has actually been exacerbated. For now we have the problem not only for music, but for the other objects as well. If it is mysterious how music can possess emotive qualities, it is equally mysterious, for example, how colors can possess them. First we had one problem; now we have *two*.

Hartshorne’s answer to how emotive properties constitute part of the perceptual world of insentient matter is unlikely to appeal to the contemporary analytic mind. Indeed, his philosophy is a kind of ‘panpsychism’: the view that so-called. ‘insentient’ matter has itself at least a degree of sentience. In other words, Hartshorne does *not* explain how insentient matter can come to possess emotive properties, but, rather, blurs the distinction between sentient and insentient; which is to say, to a degree, it’s sentience all the way down.

As I say, few will be willing to take such a drastic step with Hartshorne, although, I hasten to add, he is not some wild-eyed fanatic, in touch with astral forces, but a cool-headed philosopher of the first rank whose works abound in useful and penetrating insights. So for those of us who are not attracted to anything as beyond human experience as what Hartshorne offers, a more mundane answer must be sought for the question of how music can possess perceptual emotive properties. It is a comfort, indeed, to know that music shares this expressive aspect with such everyday objects as simple colors, and helps to assure us that there is nothing bizarre or seemingly outside the realm of the human to call a passage of music mournful or jolly or anguished. However, that does not replace the need for an explanation of *how* music can possess such emotions as perceived properties.

One thing to notice, straightaway, about the comparison of the cheerfulness of a musical passage and, say, the cheerfulness of the color yellow is that the cheerfulness of yellow, as yellow itself; is a ‘simple’ property whereas the cheerfulness of music is a ‘complex’ one. What this means is that, if I say, ‘This kerchief is yellow,’ and you say, ‘No, it’s orange,’ there is nothing else I can point to in the kerchief to show or convince you that the kerchief really is yellow and not orange. I cannot respond to your denial by saying

something like: 'But don't you see it is such-and-such and so-and-so, so it *must* be yellow.' This, of course, does not mean that there is *no* way I can try to show you that the kerchief is yellow, not orange. The usual procedure would be for us to view it in sunlight rather than artificial light, or make sure one of us is not sight-impaired in some way, and so on. What I *cannot* do, because yellow is a simple property is to point to something *else* in the kerchief and say: 'It's yellow because of *that*.' Yellow is not a complex property, so there is no 'that' to point to.

The same seems to be true of the cheerfulness of yellow. Like the yellowness itself; it is a simple quality. The cheerfulness just is a quality of the yellowness. Yellowness is not cheerful in virtue of some other perceived quality or qualities that it has beyond the yellowness (which is simply what it is).

But when we go from the cheerfulness of the color yellow to the cheerfulness of a musical passage, the situation is radically altered. When I say that a passage of music is cheerful or melancholy, I can *defend* my claim by pointing to other features of the music in virtue of which the music is cheerful or melancholy (or whatever). I can say: 'Notice the rapid, skipping tempo, the bright major tonalities, the generally loud level of sound, the leaping, galloping themes. That's what makes it so cheerful.' Or: 'Notice the slow, dragging tempo, the dark minor tonalities, the subdued, quiet dynamics, the faltering, drooping themes. *That's* what makes it so mournful.' In this sense, the cheerfulness, mournfulness, and other emotive qualities of music are 'complex' qualities, not simple ones like the cheerfulness of the color yellow. They are also the kinds of quality that are sometimes called 'emergent,' because they perceptually 'emerge' from the other qualities that make them up. The cheerfulness of the music is a new quality, so to speak, that is produced by the combined force of the bright major tonality, the rapid skipping tempo, the loud dynamics, the leaping, galloping themes.

Calling the emotive qualities of music 'complex' qualities emphasizes the fact that a passage of music is cheerful, or melancholy, or whatever in virtue of *other* musical features that make it so. Calling them 'emergent' qualities emphasizes the fact that they are perceived as distinct qualities in their own right, separate from the qualities that may 'produce' them.

That the emotive qualities of music are *complex* qualities should not be thought to imply that when someone is hearing, say, the melancholy quality of a musical passage, he or she is necessarily aware of the other qualities productive of the melancholy. A person may be hearing the melancholic quality of the music without being aware *that* the music is melancholy in virtue of its slow, halting tempo, subdued dynamics, dark minor tonalities, faltering, drooping themes. He or she may not even know that it is those kinds of musical features that are generally responsible for making music melancholy. But if someone *fails* to hear the melancholy in the music, he or she can, often, be helped to hear it by having attention drawn to those features: 'Listen to its slow, halting tempo, those dark minor tonalities, the subdued dynamics, the faltering, drooping themes. Now don't you hear the melancholy?' Frequently the answer will be 'yes.'

Among those who think that the garden-variety emotions belong to music as perceptual, heard qualities, there is little dissension from the belief that these qualities are complex, emergent qualities in the sense explained just now. Furthermore, there is general agreement about what features of music are associated with what emotive qualities. Indeed, this is not just a 'theoretical' agreement among philosophers but a 'practical' agreement among composers and ordinary listeners as well. We know the latter because for well over 300 years composers have consistently utilized just those musical features to set melancholy and cheerful and fearful texts that we, as listeners, perceive to be the features responsible for the melancholy, cheerful, fearful emotive qualities we hear in textless music, as well as the features that make the music appropriate to the emotive tone of the texts the composers set. This is not a philosopher's pipe dream but a basic fact of musical listening, and of the musical craft in the West for centuries.

However, because there is general agreement that this piece of music is melancholy in virtue of its dark, minor tonalities, subdued dynamics, slow, halting tempo, drooping, halting melody, that piece cheerful in virtue of its light, major harmonies, loud dynamics, fast, skipping tempo, leaping, galloping melodies, does not solve the problem of how or why the music is in the first case melancholy, and in the second cheerful. Why, after all, don't I just hear the dark, minor

harmonies, the subdued dynamics, the slow, halting tempo, the dropping, halting melodies? Why do I *also* hear the *melancholy*? This is the problem.

The most tempting approach to the problem of how emotions get 'into' the music is one that I am intimately familiar with, as I have been tempted by it myself. This approach begins with the thought that sad music being in slow, halting tempo, subdued in dynamics, with drooping, faltering melodies, and sad people walking in slow halting gait, with drooping bodies, speaking in subdued halting voice, cannot be altogether coincidental. Nor can it be altogether coincidental that cheerful musical works and cheerful people move rapidly, speak loudly, and even leap about, melodically in the music, bodily in people. In other words, there seems to be a direct analogy between how people look and sound when they *express* the garden-variety emotions (at least *some* of them) and how music sounds or is described when it is perceived as *expressive* of those same emotions. The intuition is that there must be some causal explanation lurking in this analogy: that the way we customarily express the garden-variety emotions must somehow explain why we hear those emotions in the music.

In my 1980 book *The Corded Shell*, later reprinted, with major additions, as *Sound Sentiment*, I attempted to give an account of musical expressiveness based, in large part, on the analogy between musical expressiveness and human *expression*. To facilitate that project I substituted for Hartshorne's example of the cheerfulness of yellow my own example of a St Bernard's sad face.

The St Bernard's face is not *expressing* sadness. The face of the St Bernard is sad even when the creature is happy, it being at the other end that she *expresses* her emotions. The face, rather, is *expressive* of sadness: the sadness is a quality of the face as the cheerfulness is a quality of the yellow color. But, unlike the color yellow, the face of the St Bernard is a *complex* perceptual object and, hence, makes a far better analogue to the expressive musical object, which is also a *complex* one. What does the analogy have to teach us.

It seems fairly clear that the sadness of the St Bernard's face is there in virtue of our seeing it as a kind of caricature – but a recognizable resemblance – of the human visage when expressing sadness. Furthermore, we can point to indi-

vidual aspects of the canine face – the sad eyes, the wrinkled brow, the drooping mouth and ears, the dewlap – that are exaggerated reflections of just such sadness-expressing features of a human face. The theory of musical expressiveness now under discussion is that expressive music is to human expressive features, overall, as the St Bernard's face is to the 'expressing' human countenance. Can this claim be substantiated?

We might usefully distinguish among the following three kinds of expressive features of music that the theory under discussion must deal with. First, there are the features of music that might be claimed to 'sound like' the sounds human beings make in expressing their emotions: the most obvious being speech. Second, there are the features of music that are said to resemble, in their sound, visible aspects of human expression behavior: for example, human gesture and bodily movement. Third, there are certain musical features, notably the major, minor, and diminished chords (to be explained in a moment), that have, for most people, the emotive tones of cheerfulness, melancholy and anguish, respectively, but that, because they are, like yellow and its cheerfulness, simple perceptual qualities, do not seem to resemble either the sound of human expression, or its visible aspect. The chords by themselves, in other words, do not have a linear (but only a vertical) structure, and so do not seem to be able to be construed as resembling human expression behavior, which *does* exhibit complex structure: there is no structure in the chords to resemble the structure of human utterance and behavior.

The resemblance of the sounds of music to the sounds of human beings expressing their emotions is something that, as we have seen, has been claimed ever since antiquity, and was the motivating force behind the endeavors of the Florentine *Camerata*, in the sixteenth century, to revive, as they saw it, ancient sung drama. But whereas Plato and the *Camerata* utilized the supposed resemblance to explain how they thought, music can arouse the emotions, the present project is to utilize it to explain how music can embody them as heard qualities.

The first question for such a theory would appear to be whether there really is a perceived resemblance between the sounds of music and the sounds of human expression. Let us take, for

example, music that is heard as melancholy, and music that is heard as cheerful.

Certainly this much can be said. Melancholy music and melancholy speech and utterance have some obvious sound qualities in common. Melancholy people tend to express themselves in soft, subdued tones of voice; and melancholy music tends to be soft and subdued. Melancholy people tend to speak slowly and haltingly; and melancholy music tends to be in slow tempi and halting rhythm. Melancholy people's voices tend to 'sink,' and tend to remain in the low vocal register; and melancholy music too exhibits the same characteristics.

In contrast, cheerful people express themselves in bright, loud, sometimes even raucous – certainly not subdued – tones; and cheerful music tends to be bright, loud, and in the high register. Cheerful people are not slow or halting in speech and utterance but bright and sprightly; and cheerful music, likewise, is quick and sprightly. Cheerful people's voices rise energetically into the high register; and so too do the melodies of cheerful music.

In all of this particular attention should be paid to melody. For there is no aspect of Western music that is more amenable to analogy with the rise and fall in pitch of the human speaking voice than the rise and fall in pitch of music's melodic line. Furthermore, melody is that aspect of music that, historically, has been singled out most frequently as the primary *expressive* aspect. This perceived analogy between melody and speech is a leitmotif in writings about music's expressiveness from Plato to the *Camerata* to the eighteenth-century philosophers to the present day. The cheerful melodic line, like the cheerful speaking voice, is high, loud, fast, 'running' and 'leaping.' The anguished melody, like the anguished speaking voice, shrieks and cries, leaps in dissonant intervals, and proceeds in jerks, with irregular pauses.

But beyond the phenomenon of music's 'sounding like' the vocal expressions of melancholy or cheerful people, many listeners perceive an analogy between the heard properties of music and visible human behavior as well. Music is customarily described in terms very similar to those we use to describe the motion of the human body under the influence of such emotions as melancholy and cheerfulness. Thus a musical phrase

may leap joyously or droop, or falter, like a person in motion. To put it more generally, music is customarily described in terms of motion; and so the same descriptions we use to characterize it are frequently the ones we use to describe the visible motions of the human body in the expression of the garden-variety emotions.

I called this theory of musical expressiveness, in *The Corded Shell*, the 'contour theory,' because, to put it somewhat figuratively, the contour' of music, its sonic 'shape,' bears a structural analogy to the heard and seen manifestations of human emotive expression. One thing to be noticed straightaway about the contour theory is that it is going to have trouble with our third kind of expressive musical feature, the major, minor, and diminished chords; for *they* do not have any contour at all, so find no analogue, apparently, in the contours of human expression behavior. I shall deal with these seemingly anomalous expressive features in a moment. But before I do I want to complete this account of the contour theory.

The contour theory of musical expressiveness faces immediate problems. To begin with, it must not become a representational theory: it must not, that is to say, be construed as the theory that music 'represents' the voice and gesture of human expression, the way paint on canvas represents the visible features of the world. For representation does not capture the way we experience the emotive qualities of music. We do not, that is to say, hear sounds as representations of melancholy and cheerful behavior, the way we see paint on canvas as a representation of melancholy and cheerful men and women, and *then* hear the music, in virtue of these representations, as melancholy and cheerful. We hear the melancholy and cheerfulness of the music immediately, in the music, and can be quite unaware of the features of the music in virtue of which it is melancholy or cheerful. And even if we are consciously aware of the expressive-making features of the music, which we may frequently be, we do not perceive them as representations of anything.

Furthermore, there must be some explanation produced, in defense of the contour theory, for why it is the similarity in structure between music and *expression behavior* that plays so important a role in the listening experience. After all, the contour of music is probably similar in structure to inanimate sounds and natural objects, as well

as to human expression behavior. What's so special about expression behavior that *it* should be singled out for mention above those other things?

Finally, does the contour theory do any better a job of capturing our experience of music's expressive qualities than a representational theory would do? Can it capture the way we experience the emotions in music, namely as directly perceived perceptual qualities?

In order for the analogy between musical contour and the contour of human expression behavior to work non-representationally, it must work subliminally: that is to say, we must not be fully aware of what is going on; we must not be aware of the analogy. Let us, for the moment, assume that this is what is happening. But why should we hear *emotions* in the music because of this subliminal perception, and not something else?

I believe one possible answer to this question can be found in a well-known perceptual phenomenon. When presented with ambiguous figures, we tend to see them as animate rather than inanimate forms: as living rather than non-living entities. We tend to see living forms in clouds, in stains on walls, in the shadowy things lurking in the woods. We see the stick as a snake. Why? Because, perhaps, we are hard-wired by evolution – by natural selection – to do so. Evolution says: 'Better safe than sorry. Better wrong than eaten.' Living things can be dangers to you. It is better to see the stick, immediately, incorrectly, as a snake, than to be snake bit, in pondering the question, if it turns out to be a snake after all.

Now, if this be true of sights, might it not be true of sounds as well? Might it not be the case that we are hard-wired by natural selection to hear sounds, where possible, as animate: where possible, as in music, as utterance and 'behavior'? I advance that as a possible, perhaps plausible, hypothesis. If it is true, it tells us why we hear the analogue of musical contour to human behavior and not to the other things it might resemble.

But if we hear sound as animate, why do we hear it as *expressively* animate? Well, if you want to carry through the 'survival' idea, it is to our advantage to know what emotive attitude is being evinced towards us by the living creature we may be encountering. If it is anger, we must prepare

for fight or flight to be safe. If it is a benign emotion, other behavior is appropriate.

One might also add to these 'evolutionary' considerations the fact that just those 'simple' emotions we tend to hear in music are emotions whose expression behavior in human beings has direct analogues in the expression behavior of the higher primates and other mammals. In other words, their modes of expression seem hard-wired and deep in the inherited nature not only of us, but of other animals as well. This can be seen as corroborating evidence for the evolutionary story already told.

But now a further question presses itself upon us. In the case of ambiguous visual phenomena, we are conscious of what we are seeing (or think we are seeing). I take the stick for a snake and *run*. However, that does not seem to be what is happening in music. We are conscious of the expressive property, the emotion; we are not conscious of taking the musical contour for human utterance or behavior. Is there any plausible reason for this to be the case? We can't just *assume* it to make our theory work.

Well, consider this. The sense of sight is the primary 'survival' sense for human beings (and other of the higher primates). The sense of hearing is *not*, although it may very well have been for our ancestors way down the evolutionary chain. Thus there is no need for us *consciously* to hear things as threatening the way we consciously see things that way. So it is not completely unreasonable to suppose that what may very well have been a propensity consciously to hear ambiguous sounds as animate and (potentially) threatening has atrophied in us, like the appendix, and remains a vestigial relic of a more sound-oriented past. To put it another way, it is not completely unreasonable, on evolutionary grounds, to think that, while the seeing of ambiguous forms as animate remains a conscious phenomenon of human perception, the hearing of sounds that way has sunk back into semi-consciousness as a kind of 'background noise.'

Here, then, is *one* theory of how music comes to embody expressive qualities like melancholy and cheerfulness. It is agreed on all hands that music is melancholy, and cheerful, and so on, in virtue of certain standardly accepted features. It is perennially remarked on that these features bear analogy to the expression behavior, bodily,

gestural, vocal, linguistic, of human beings. One can construct an evolutionary story of how and why we might be subconsciously, subliminally aware of this analogy and that this should cause us to perceive the music as melancholy or cheerful or the like as we perceive the sadness of the St Bernard's face. I have named this theory the contour theory of musical expressiveness.

But we have yet to work one further element into the contour theory: that is the expressive chords, major, minor, and diminished. These chords are generally perceived as cheerful, melancholy, and anguished, respectively; and you can hear this for yourself by playing the three notes together on the piano: first, C–E–G (major); then C–E flat–G (minor); finally, C–E flat–G flat (diminished). The problem is that these individual chords, not having a contour, being experienced as simple qualities, do not seem to bear any analogy at all to human behavior – hence must be expressive of cheerfulness, melancholy, and anguish in some *other* way than that allowed for by the contour theory of musical expressiveness. So the contour theory cannot be the whole story.

At least this much can be said for the contour theory straightaway. It is no worse off than any other theory in this regard. There is *no* generally accepted explanation for the difference in emotive quality between the major and minor chords, over which much ink has been spilled in the last 300 years. So, that the contour theory cannot provide one is no great deficit. But there is no harm, anyhow, in trying. Here are two suggestions.

The first suggestion is that we hear the vertical structure of the chords as a kind of contour. Compared to the major triad – that is, the major three-note chord, C–E–G – the minor triad has a lowered third: that is, the E is the third of the C-major chord, the E flat is the third lowered a half step, the smallest interval in the Western harmonic system. (The E is called the 'third' because it is the third note up from the C: that is, C (1), D (2), E (3). The G is called the 'fifth' because it is the fifth note up.) Now think of the lowered third, E flat as kind of sagging, or sinking, depressingly from E to E flat. Might that give a depressing, melancholy cast to the C-minor triad? There is a downward tending contour of the C-minor triad, as compared to the C-major one, like the

downcast contour of the melancholy speaking voice or posture. And the diminished triad, C–E flat–G flat, is even more depressed: it has both a sinking third *and* a sinking fifth. Pretty far-fetched? Perhaps so.

Well, then, let's try this. Perhaps the chords should not be considered as isolated elements but in context: that is to say, functioning *in* musical structure. Perhaps it is from their function within musical compositions that they gain their emotive color.

If you go to the piano again, and play the major triad, C–E–G, the minor triad, C–E flat–G, and the diminished triad, C–E flat–G flat, in succession, I think you will perceive a big difference between the first two and the third. The diminished triad is an 'active' chord: that is to say, it sounds as if it must go somewhere; it must, as a musician would say, be 'resolved.' It can't stay at rest where it is. Or, another way of putting it: you couldn't hear it as the final chord of a musical composition. To hear what I mean, now lower the G flat to D flat, and raise the C to D flat. You have, in doing that, 'resolved' the diminished chord, and you can hear for yourself that things are now 'at rest.'

Might one suggest, then, that what gives the diminished chord its dark, anguished quality is its function, in musical structure, as an active, unconsummated, unresolved chord? It is restless, so to say, in its musical function; when it occurs in a compositional structure, at least until fairly recently in the history of the Western harmonic system, it imparts that restlessness to the contour of the melody it accompanies. From its 'syntactic' or 'grammatical' role in music it gains, by association, as it were, even when alone, its restless, 'anxious' emotive tone.

Furthermore, might this not be true, to a lesser degree, of the minor triad as well? It is, indeed, a matter of historical fact that the minor chord, until well into the nineteenth century, was considered more active than the major, which is why compositions in the minor mode for a long time almost invariably ended on a major rather than a minor chord. And, although ending on a minor chord is now no big deal, I think we still feel the minor ending as more restless than the major. You can hear this for yourself by resolving the diminished triad, C–E flat–G flat, two different ways: first, by lowering the G flat one whole

step to E (F flat) and raising the C one half step to D flat; and then doing what you did before, lowering the G flat to F and raising the C to D flat. Do this a few times in succession. Which resolution sounds more 'restful' to you? I would venture to predict that it is going to be the latter: the major resolution. For what you did first was to resolve the diminished chord to D flat minor, and then to resolve it to D flat major. I think you, like your musical ancestors for over three centuries, found the major resolution grammatically and emotionally the more fulfilling one: the one that sounds the most stationary; the one that sounds the most completely *final*.

I don't know if this attempt to accommodate the major, minor, and diminished chords to the contour theory of musical expressiveness is any more plausible than the first. In any event, even where the contour theory does best, with the larger structural elements of music, particularly melody, it is not without serious problems and many detractors.

In the version of the contour theory that I have given, *my own version*, there are numerous difficulties that even I find daunting. Here are some.

To begin with, how convincing is the claim that there are recognizable analogies or similarities between music and the 'shape' of human expression? Do melodies *really* much resemble human speech in any significant way? Many people think the similarities adduced pretty far-fetched. And when one goes to supposed analogies between how music sounds and how human expression *looks*, there is bound to be more skepticism still. Does it make any sense at all to say that a passage of music is melancholy in virtue of sounding the way a human being gestures or moves when he or she is melancholy? Can music *sound* like a gesture or bodily posture? Can sense modalities be crossed that way? There is certainly plenty of room for doubt about it.

Furthermore, the whole psychological apparatus that the contour theory requires is highly conjectural, to say the least. What evidence, if any, is there for the claim that listeners subliminally hear the analogy, if indeed it exists, between the contour of music and human expression? And even if they do hear it, does that adequately explain our experience of hearing emotions *in* the music as perceptual qualities? As well, does the

phenomenon of seeing things in ambiguous figures – seeing the stick as a snake, or the faces and figures in clouds – transfer to sounds and what we hear (if anything) in them?

Finally, what of the evolutionary explanation offered for, first, the tendency to 'animate' ambiguous figures and, second, the difference between this tendency, as evinced in visual perception, and as evinced in hearing? Are they plausible? Is there evidence for *either*?

The biologist Stephen J. Gould scorns such armchair evolutionary explanations as I have given, labeling them, contemptuously, 'just-so stories,' the point being that a natural selection story, just like Kipling's fanciful 'explanations' for how the leopard got its spots, or the elephant its trunk, can be made up by almost anyone, including an amateur like myself, for any trait you like. So it is probably wise not to place much faith in these exercises. The skeptical, therefore, will be wary of the evolutionary support I have adduced for the claims that, all things being equal, we will see living forms rather than non-living ones in ambiguous perceptual arrays, and, second, that, because of the primacy of sight over hearing as a 'survival sense,' in human beings, our perception of 'animate' forms in sounds, as opposed to sights, will be dim or subliminal, as the contour theory requires.

Add all of these difficulties together and the contour theory begins to look pretty shaky. Indeed, it looks shaky not only to its detractors but to at least one of its supporters as well: *me*. Having vigorously defended the contour theory on two separate occasions, I can no longer say that I am not without serious qualms.

But the funny thing about the contour theory, or, in general, the theory that music is expressive of the garden-variety emotions by virtue of analogy to human expression behavior, both vocal and bodily, 'is its perennial attraction. It simply refuses to die, in spite of its numerous difficulties. There doesn't seem to be another, more plausible alternative.

That there isn't another game in town, of course, does not constitute much of an argument for the contour theory or its relations. Tomorrow is another day, and may well bring another, more convincing account.

What, then, should we do here and now? When a problem remains unsolved, one obvious

strategy is to work at it until it gives up its secret, and only *then* go on to the problem that logically follows next. But that is not the strategy I think will have the best results. I think it a mistake for us to remain bogged down with the question of *how* music comes to embody the garden-variety emotions as perceptual qualities. Rather, since there is a consensus, more or less, that music does exhibit the expressive qualities in this way, let us now go on to examine what role, as so understood, they play in musical structure and the musical experience.

Let us, then, treat music, in this regard, as what the scientists call a 'black box': that is to say, a machine whose inner workings are unknown to us. We know what goes in, and what

comes out, but what causes what goes in to produce what comes out – of that we are ignorant. With regard to how music comes to exhibit the garden-variety emotions as perceptual qualities, it is to us a black box. We know what goes in: the musical features that, for three centuries, have been associated with the particular emotions music is expressive of. And we know what goes out: the expressive qualities the music is heard to be expressive of. And rather than becoming obsessed with penetrating this black box, we should, or at least *some* of us should, go on to see what implications this new way of looking at music's expressive qualities (for it *is* a new way) has for our understanding of music as a whole.

Music and Emotions

Jenefer Robinson

Ever since Plato people have thought that there is an especially intimate relationship between music and the emotions. In Book III of the Republic, Plato argued that the musical mode known as the “Lydian” mode should be banned from the education of future governors of the state on the grounds that it makes people lascivious and lazy, whereas the Dorian mode should be encouraged because it makes people – or more specifically, men – brave and virtuous. This idea that music has the power to *arouse* listeners’ emotions survives to the present day and has recently received empirical support.¹ Other people have claimed that music can also *represent* the passions. According to the Baroque doctrine of *Affektenlehre*, different movements of a suite or concerto should “represent” distinct emotional states such as gaiety or melancholy. The emotion “represented” was often a principal means of unifying the movement. Some Baroque composers also wrote “character pieces” that portray different characters or temperaments, sometimes illustrating that of their friends or the notabilities of the day.² Finally, in the Romantic era, it became a commonplace that music can *express* emotions, whether the emotions of a character or protago-

nist in the music or the emotions of the composer himself.³

In this essay I am going to explain how music can *express* emotions and *arouse* emotions. And although strictly speaking, music cannot *represent* emotions, it can tell psychological stories that lend themselves to expressive interpretations. As a philosopher, my main aim is to analyze these different relationships between emotion and music, but I will also be illustrating my arguments with an array of musical examples.

1 The Musical Representation of Emotions

Pictorial representation or depiction is usually taken as the paradigm of representation in the arts, but music does not function very well as a pictorial art.⁴ To represent something is to refer to or identify it: a picture is normally a picture of a particular thing, such as a person, a scene, or an event: Napoleon at St Bernard’s Pass, the cliffs at Etretat, the Battle of San Romano. But music is ill-equipped to depict particular things. A very few things have a uniquely recognizable sound, such as the call of the cuckoo or the chugging of a train; hence it’s possible to identify the cuckoo or the train from its sounds alone. But with these exceptions, music is by and large unable to refer to particular things or sorts of things.

A piece of music can *have* certain qualities: it can be heroic, serene, sad, stormy, merry, dignified, pompous, light-hearted and so on. When a piece of music is said to *represent* something, it is invariably in virtue of the fact that it is being characterized in a certain way, via such qualities: it is being characterized as serene, heroic, stormy or whatever. But it's not the *emotional quality* that's represented; typically the emotional quality *characterizes* something else. To this extent music can "paint pictures" in sound. But what it is that's being characterized – the particular thing or event or type of thing or event – cannot usually be identified just by listening to the musical "description." It's just too general. *Anything* serene or heroic or stormy has an equal claim to be "represented" by serene, heroic or stormy music.⁵ We have to be told – by means of a title or some other conventional tag – what is being identified. Once we know that the music is supposed to represent a person, a country or a scene, then we can hear *how* it is being characterized: as serene or heroic or stormy or whatever. But the characterization alone is not normally enough to distinguish a specific kind of individual – a man, a country, a scene – much less a specific individual – Nimrod, Finland, the North Sea. Even a "descriptive" piece like Debussy's *La Mer* could easily be a description of different kinds of weather or different people's temperaments rather than different moods of the sea. By contrast, a picture of the sea is recognizable as being of the sea without any title, and even an expressionist or cubist picture of a man (say) is recognizably of a man, even if we might need a title to tell us which particular man is being identified (Kahnweiler or Vollard).

When the Baroque composers said that a movement "represented" a particular emotion, they were typically representing a particular "character," in the double sense of a certain type of person and a certain *quality*. Thus, C.P.E. Bach produced "Character Pieces," *describing* the indecisive person, the complacent person and so on. His pieces describe a generic sort of person or character, which are often emotional or quasi-emotional – the serene person, the irritable person – but once again they do so by virtue of possessing certain emotional *qualities*, not by referring to particular people. In fact, the composers of the Baroque probably did not take very seriously the idea that they were "representing"

emotions; they use the term "represent" in this context more-or-less interchangeably with the word "arouse" or "evoke."

There are some recent semiotic theorists, however, who take very seriously the idea that music *represents* emotions.⁶ I shall take Susanne Langer as representative, even though she antedates today's semioticians. According to Langer, music "represents" emotional life, but not specific emotions such as joy and sadness. Instead, she thinks that music represents "*the morphology of feeling*" (Langer 1976, p. 238). Joy and sadness, although different emotions, may have a similar morphology, as in intense joy and intense sadness, or calm joy and calm sadness. Instead of representing specific emotions, music provides a "*formulation and representation* of emotions, moods, mental tensions and resolutions – a 'logical picture' of sentient, responsive life ..." (ibid. p. 222).

Music, she thinks, is a "presentational symbol," i.e., it represents the patterns of our emotional life by virtue of the fact that it shares those patterns.

[T]here are certain aspects of the so-called "inner life" – physical or mental – which have formal properties similar to those of music – patterns of motion and rest, of tension and release, of agreement and disagreement, preparation, fulfillment, excitation, sudden change, etc. (ibid. p. 228)

By sharing their dynamic structure, music reveals "the rationale of feelings, the rhythm and pattern of their rise and decline and intertwining" (ibid. p. 238). Moreover, music thereby takes on a special *cognitive* role, because the forms it articulates are forms "*which language cannot set forth*" (ibid. p. 233).

Many people with quite different views about emotions and music have found Langer's view attractive. The trouble is that although it sounds persuasive, it is not clear what the theory is actually asserting. What exactly is "the morphology of feeling"? My own suspicion is that Langer is talking about the *phenomenology* of emotion, the way emotions *feel*, the inner experience of turbulence interspersed with calm, or tense anxiety followed by the release of relief, and so on. The trouble is that there is no good reason why we should interpret the patterns she detects in music as specifically emotional. Just as a stormy piece of music

can represent *anything* stormy, whether it's the weather, the sea, or a man's fiery temper, so music with a particular pattern of tension and relaxation is capable of representing *anything* having that same pattern.

Despite the limitations of the theory, however, Langer's emphasis on *patterns* of human feeling, rather than on the simple character of a whole movement is welcome. It is a nice aspect of Langer's theory that because, in her view, music articulates the dynamics of our inner life, it "reveals" not just isolated emotions of this or that sort, but the way that our inner life unfolds over a period of time. As we'll see later, in a certain sense she's right about this.

2 What are Emotions?

There is currently some dispute about the nature of emotion. Different theorists have argued that emotions are *feelings* or *judgments* or bits of *behavior* or *physiological changes* or *states of action readiness*. However, in my view, emotions are *processes* that involve all these things and others as well. (I am speaking here about emotional episodes, not long-term emotional states, like long-term love or hatred or contempt.) I don't have space here to defend my view in detail.⁷ Suffice to say that current evidence from psychology and neurophysiology⁸ suggests that typically (but not invariably) what sets off an emotion process is a rough and ready *affective appraisal* of the environment in terms of what's good or bad for me, what's a friend and what's an enemy, what's a threat and what's a boon, or perhaps even what's new and strange and needs further examination. When we respond emotionally to something in the environment (whether "out there" or in our own heads) it is typically because something important has happened that bears on our interests or that of our "group."

The "affective appraisal" immediately and automatically produces an emotional response. This is the second stage of the emotion process. An emotional response consists in changes in autonomic and hormonal activity, in facial and vocal expression and in "action readiness." Typically these responses are functional. An increased heart rate and clenching of my fists prepares me for attack when I'm angry; a decreased

heart rate and cowering behavior prepares me for submission in fear. On the other hand, responses that might once have been adaptive may no longer be so. Clenching my fists and preparing to attack is not very appropriate if I'm angry with my boss. Submissive behavior may fail to ward off a threat.

Thirdly, after the immediate emotional response there is always "cognitive monitoring" of the situation that confirms, rejects, or modifies the verdict of the affective appraisal. Suppose, for example, that I come [home] late at night and see a shadow under the trees. I make a very quick affective appraisal that I'm under threat and my body reacts immediately and instinctively to this appraisal, by preparing to deal with the threat: increasing heart rate, sending extra adrenaline into the bloodstream, and putting me into a defensive posture.⁹ But right after the affective appraisal, cognitive monitoring kicks in, confirming the initial appraisal (yes, it's a mugger; I'd better run), or modifying it (That's not a mugger; it's beloved Joe home at last from the war), or aborting the emotion process altogether (That's not a mugger; it's just the shadow of the trees).¹⁰ Since the initial appraisal is crude, there is plenty of room at this stage of the emotion process to refine one's interpretation of the emotional situation. "Cognitive monitoring" includes labeling the emotion as fear, delight, curiosity or whatever. It takes time to figure out how I (instinctively) reacted. It is only after thinking about it that I can name the emotion I am experiencing (and of course I can also mis-name it).

Emotion, then, is a process, in which there is a sequence of events. Furthermore, the way that the process unfolds is modified by feedback from each of the elements involved. I respond automatically and involuntarily to the shadow under the trees, but then cognitive monitoring kicks in and tells me it is beloved Joe, so my emotion changes from fear to joy. On another occasion, my facial expression of anger at your slight communicates to you that I am angry and so you back away to propitiate me and my anger dissipates. Each emotional response is part of an ongoing sequence of events, and one emotional sequence constantly gives way to others as changes occur in each of the elements of the emotion process. As the psychologist Phoebe Ellsworth (1994) puts it: our emotional life occurs in "streams" which change

all the time in response to ever changing evaluations, ever evolving actions and action tendencies, ever changing bodily states and feelings.

3 Animating Music: Musical Expressiveness as “Hearing-as”

For many people, to say that a piece of music “expresses sadness” simply means that the music has a certain quality that is named by an emotion word: the music “is sad.”¹¹ Expression on this view is simply a matter of possessing expressive qualities, and expressive qualities are simply “aesthetic qualities” like any other.¹² But music can be sad or jolly for many different reasons, some of which have little to do with the expression of emotion. Some music is “jolly” by virtue of its cultural *associations*: “Jingle Bells,” for example, is “jolly” largely because it’s associated with Christmas jollity. Other music is called “happy” or “sad” by virtue of *conventions*. With some notable exceptions, if it’s in the minor key, it’s more likely to be described as “sad” in our culture, and if it’s in the major it’s more likely to be called “happy.”

A better idea is that music that’s expressive of an emotion, such as sadness, *sounds and moves* like someone who is sad. Broadly speaking, this is the theory of musical expressiveness associated with the names of Peter Kivy and Stephen Davies,¹³ which I have elsewhere rather unkindly christened the “doggy theory.” That’s because both theorists compare expressiveness in music to the expressive appearance of a dog’s face. In *The Corded Shell*, Kivy compared the *sadness* in the face of a Saint Bernard, with the sadness in music; one *looks* sad and the other *sounds* sad. And in *Musical Meaning and Expression* Stephen Davies makes the same point, using the example of the basset-hound: “the expressiveness of music,” he claimed, “consists in its presenting emotion characteristics in its appearance” (Davies 1994, p. 228). Just as the face of a basset-hound is called “sad” because that’s the way sad people typically look when they are expressing their sadness, so music is called “sad” because it sounds and/or moves like a person who is sad. The point is that like sad doggy faces, sad music is called “sad” because it has a *sad appearance*. We see the face as sad and we hear the music as sad, but nobody is actually feeling sad. Music is *expressive*

of sadness without being an *expression* of anyone’s sadness, i.e., without revealing anything about someone’s actual state of mind.

Emotion characteristics are attributed to the appearances people present and not, as is true of emotions, to the people themselves. It is faces and the like that are sad-looking. Faces do not feel emotions and do not think thoughts; they are nonsentient (ibid. p. 223).

According to Kivy and Davies, we hear music as expressive of emotions because in listening to music, we *anthropomorphize* or “animate” it so that we *hear it as* expressive of emotion.¹⁴ In calling music “sad,” we anthropomorphize the music, just as we anthropomorphize the dog when we say he has a “sad” face. Both Kivy and Davies also allow a role for convention in music, accepting that the “sadness” of the minor key, for example, is not a matter of how people sound or move when they are sad: it is unclear how a voice or gesture could be in the minor key.¹⁵

Kivy called his version of the theory the “contour and convention” theory. Some music is expressive of emotion by virtue of a cultural convention. But more fundamentally, music is expressive of emotion by virtue of sharing the “contours” of vocal or behavioral expressive gestures made by human beings when in the throes of emotion. Thus Kivy emphasized the way a musical line, such as the famous “weeping figure” that occurs, for example, at the beginning of *Arianna’s Lament* in Monteverdi’s *Arianna*, can resemble the “contour” or intonation pattern of a grief-stricken voice. Because of this resemblance, we hear the music as expressive of grief.

For Davies, the experienced resemblance between music and vocal utterance is less important than that between musical movement and expressive behavior, particularly “the gait, attitude, air, carriage, posture, and comportment of the human body” (Davies 2006, p. 182). Moreover, whereas in *The Corded Shell* Kivy restricted his discussion to short snippets of music, Davies emphasizes extended passages. “The resemblance that counts most for musical expressiveness ... is that between music’s temporally unfolding dynamic structure and configurations of human behavior associated with emotion” (ibid. p. 181). We experience movement in music in terms of

“progress from high to low or fast to slow,” but also in “the multistranded waxing and waning of tensions generated variously within the harmony, the mode of articulation and phrasing, subtle nuances of timing, the delay or defeat of expected continuations, and so on” (ibid. pp. 181–2). Davies also thinks that “this movement is like human behavior in that it seems purposeful and goal-directed” (ibid. p. 182).

To those who object that there is no greater “objective” resemblance between musical movement and emotions than between musical movement and various natural phenomena – the weather, the moods of the sea – Davies responds that the degree of resemblance is beside the point: listeners simply do experience a resemblance between the music and “the realm of human emotion.” Listeners make the connection between music and emotion by “an *experience of similarity* (my italics),” not a mere *recognition that* there is a similarity. And our interests shape how we experience the world. As he says, we’re more likely to see a weeping willow as a downcast person than as a frozen waterfall, even if the similarity between the willow and the waterfall is no less than that between the willow and the droopy person. That’s because in our experience of the world we unthinkingly anthropomorphize the things around us, including the music that we hear.

There’s no doubt that the doggy theory successfully describes one way in which we can hear music as expressive. Nevertheless, the theory has several important limitations. First, both Kivy and Davies think that music can express only those emotional states that exhibit characteristic vocal intonations or expressive behaviors. But if music can express only those emotions that have a recognizable behavioral profile, then it’s hard to see how music can express patterns of feeling, the way that hope builds and builds only to be frustrated, or the way in which despair is with difficulty overcome and transforms gradually into resignation. Second, and relatedly, it seems to follow that cognitively complex emotions cannot be expressed by music. There are no distinguishing vocal or behavioral marks of hope or resignation, for example. Finally, the theory does not explain why listeners are so powerfully moved by emotional expression in music. We are not particularly moved (except perhaps to laughter) by the sad doggy faces of the St. Bernard and the bas-

set-hound. Why, then, should we be moved by the sad appearance of music?

Davies has tried to respond to all three of these objections. First, he has argued that a pattern of feeling can be expressed by an appropriate sequence of musical gestures. Thus, “just as music might present the characteristic of an emotion in its aural appearance, so too it might present the appearance of a pattern of feelings through the order of its expressive development” (Davies 1994, p. 263). But if what we are listening to is a sequence of expressive “contours” without any underlying psychological reality, there is no organic connection between one expressive “appearance” and the next: they are simply concatenated. It’s like watching a series of expressions moving across someone’s face. If there is a pattern, it’s only because of the thoughts and desires and goals and so on that underlie the sequence. If it’s just a series of facial contortions, why call this a *pattern* of expressions?

Secondly, Davies (1994) has defended the idea that music can express cognitively complex emotions, arguing that a piece of music can express hope, for example, if the “emotion characteristics in appearance” of a longish piece or passage of music are judiciously ordered. But again, a mere sequence of expressive gestures is not enough to distinguish a cognitively complex emotion such as hope, whatever the order in which these gestures occur. If all you have to work with are expressive gestures, then the best you can do to express hope in music is to have a cheerful passage followed by a sad one or a passage in which cheerfulness and sadness somehow intermingle or something of this sort. But the expression of hope requires the expression of desires and thoughts. A hopeful person is one who *wishes* for something to happen that he *construes* as good.¹⁶ Hope cannot be expressed merely by a succession of bodily gestures and vocal intonations.

More recently, Davies has conceded that only a few emotional types “can be individuated solely on the basis of observed bodily comportment” (2006, p. 183). His candidates for expressible emotions include sadness and happiness, timidity, anger, “swaggering arrogance, the mechanical rigidity that goes with repression and alienation from the physicality of existence, ethereal dreaminess, and sassy sexuality” (ibid.). Notice, however, that apart from sadness, happiness and

anger, the rest of these examples are not strictly speaking emotions at all, but rather *behaviors* indicative of emotions. As for more complex emotions, Davies is cautious: "where deep sadness gives way gradually to joy and abandonment, it may be reasonable to regard the transition as consistent with acceptance and resolution" (2006, p. 185). But notice here that "acceptance" and "resolution" are inner states, requiring beliefs, desires and intentions. It's implausible that the transformation of a deeply sad appearance (like a grieving facial expression) into a joyful appearance (like a smile) is capable of expressing a complex shift in one's inner states, involving *thoughts* of acceptance, an *intention* to be courageous, a *wish* that things had been different conquered by a *desire* for the capacity to deal with things as they are, etc. In general, if all musical expression could be explained according to the doggy theory, then music would be able to express very little about our inner life.

The final problem concerns why expressive music should be moving, if the doggy theory is correct. Here Davies relies on the theory of contagion that I'll be discussing later. As we'll see, it's true that music can indeed affect the motor system and to some degree change people's behavior and mood. But we are not typically moved by an expression of emotion in a musical "appearance" in the way that we are moved by an expression of genuine emotion. Even if I am affected physiologically and motorically by a piece of expressive music, this does not explain the power of our emotional responses to expressive music. After all, I am powerfully moved not because my friend has a sad-looking face, but only because that sad-looking face is a sign that she really is sad.¹⁷

Jerrold Levinson propounds a variety of the "animation theory," which, unlike the doggy theory, accepts that what we experience as musical expressiveness is an experience as of someone genuinely expressing his or her emotions. In Levinson's formulation, "a passage of music P is expressive of an emotion E if and only if P, in context, is readily heard, by a listener experienced in the genre in question, as an expression of E" (Levinson 2006, p. 193. See also Levinson 1996). It is crucial to Levinson's view that expression "requires an expresser." He believes that when we hear music as expressive of emotion, we hear or imagine an agent or persona in the music, the

"owner" of the states expressed. Now, when we listen to a lyric song such as "Gute Nacht," the opening song in Schubert's song cycle *Winterreise*, we naturally hear it as emanating from a person or character in the music who is expressing his gloomy state of mind. In Levinson's view, however, we also hear all purely instrumental music ("absolute music") that's expressive of emotion in the very same way, namely, as emanating from a persona in the music, which may be a "character" or may be the composer himself or a persona of the composer.

There is much to be said in favour of Levinson's view. It allows for musical expressiveness to be treated as the genuine expression of emotion. It permits us to hear extended passages of music as expressing unfolding psychological states, rather than as mere sequences of expressive "appearances." Once we hear the music as genuinely expressing a sequence of emotions, it is possible to find "patterns of feeling" in the music as well as the expression of cognitively complex emotions such as hope. If we hear a persona in the music, we can hear him as *seeking* or *striving towards* certain goals (as fragments of a theme struggle to transform into another theme with a different character), as *desiring* certain things and rejecting others (as a sequence of harmonies yearns towards resolution but is turned aside into an alien key which it then struggles to resist), or as *remembering* past events with nostalgia or bitterness (as when an early sunny theme is recalled later in a piece with reassuring or troubling effect).¹⁸ Emotion characteristics in appearances do not strive or seek or desire or remember, but people do. Through positing a persona in the music, Levinson allows us to hear the music as expressing the inner states of this persona. Finally, because it allows us to hear the music as a genuine expression, it makes sense that we would be moved by music's expressiveness.

Despite its many virtues, however, I do not want to endorse Levinson's theory because I think that in some respects it goes too far and in other respects it doesn't go far enough. First, Levinson means his theory to be a general account of expressiveness in music. But there are many pieces which in common parlance are said to "express melancholy" even though we have no inclination to posit a melancholy persona in the music. As we've seen, a piece can be "sad" or

“cheerful” for diverse reasons: associations or conventions may play the major role. Other pieces can be explained simply by reference to the doggy theory: we hear a piece as sad because of its sad “contours.” Perhaps we should stipulate that the term “musical expression” should be confined to those pieces that fit Levinson’s theory but then we need to know how to determine which those are.

This brings me to my second objection to Levinson’s theory: in some respects it doesn’t go far enough. For Levinson, like Kivy and Davies, expression in music is primarily something determined by the experience of listeners or audiences, not primarily something achieved by artists. Now, it’s true that emotional expression in ordinary life is a means of communication – looking at your gait and posture tells me how you’re feeling – but it’s also true that the reason why expression is such a good means of communication is that, when it is sincere, it accurately reveals genuine inner states. In other words, expression is primarily something achieved by expressers, not something noticed or experienced by spectators or audiences.¹⁹

In conclusion, there is much expressiveness that does not need Levinson’s persona, and there is some expressiveness that does require the persona but not merely as something imagined or postulated by listeners, but as a genuine (dramatic) protagonist genuinely expressing his or her emotions.

4 Music as the Expression of Emotion: a Romantic Theory

The Romantic movement at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries spawned the idea that one of the main goals of the arts is to *express* the emotions of artists. Wordsworth famously described poetry in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” that are “recollected in tranquility.” And Beethoven is reported to have said to Louis Schlosser that “stimulated by those moods which poets turn into words, I turn my ideas into tones which resound, roar and rage until at last they stand before me in the form of notes” (Morgenstern 1956, p. 87). In the wake of Romanticism, many philosophers of very

different stripes, including John Dewey, Eugene Véron, and R.G. Collingwood, agreed that the expression of emotions is the defining feature of all art. This view seems a bit stretched, however. Although Western Romantic music and poetry may express emotions, Huichol votive bowls, Bauhaus architecture, and Op art paintings don’t seem to be mainly – if at all – interested in the expression of emotion. These “expression” theories are better understood, in my view, as theories of artistic expression rather than of art per se.

One of the most carefully worked out versions of the expression theory comes from the philosopher R.G. Collingwood, a follower of the Hegelian philosopher, Benedetto Croce. Collingwood acknowledged that there is much in common between the expression of emotion in ordinary life and the expression of emotion in artworks: in both cases there is someone who is actually in an emotional state and who communicates that state to other people. However, that being said, he thinks that there are at least three ways in which artistic expression differs from what we call expression in ordinary contexts. To “express” an emotion in real life means first that you manifest or show this emotion by means of facial or vocal expressions, by the visible concomitants of autonomic arousal (trembling, weeping, blushing), or through “action tendencies” (fist-clenching, hiding, caressing). But Collingwood says that expression in music (and the other arts) is quite distinct from displaying *symptoms* of emotion (as he calls blushing and fist-clenching and so on). A flood of tears *betrays* an emotion willy-nilly; a symphony that expresses emotion is an object *intentionally constructed* so as to express that emotion.

Secondly, an artistic expression is distinguished from the *describing* or *labeling* of an emotion: when I say “I love you,” that would seem to be a paradigm expression of love in ordinary life, but it is not an expression at all in Collingwood’s sense, because describing my emotion as “love” *generalizes* it; my words do not capture the specificity of my love for you and distinguish it from all other loves. Artistic expression, on the other hand, *individualizes* an emotion. If the funeral march of Beethoven’s *Eroica* symphony expresses sorrow, this is a quite distinct sorrow from that expressed by the funeral march in Chopin’s B flat minor Piano Sonata.

Thirdly, expression in art cannot be identified with the *arousal* of emotion in audiences: an artist “proper” shouldn’t be aiming to arouse emotions in audiences, because that would be manipulating other people’s emotions rather than sincerely expressing his own. However, if a composer genuinely succeeds in expressing an emotion in a piece of music, then the audience should, as a kind of by-product, be able to experience it for themselves.

What really makes the difference between ordinary expression and the expression of emotion in music and the other arts is that artistic expression is essentially a *cognitive* process, a matter of articulating an emotion in such a way that the nature of the emotion is clarified for the understanding. Here we see indirectly the influence of Hegel who thought of the arts as a mode of *understanding* distinct from both religion and philosophy. Collingwood’s main examples are literary: the poet who wants to express his emotions in a poem but doesn’t know exactly what emotions he is feeling but who, *in writing the poem*, thereby comes to *understand* that emotion. In my terms, the finished poem is both the result of and an embodiment of “cognitive monitoring.” An emotion that was unclear in the poet’s mind is clarified once it has been articulated in a structure of words, imagery, rhythm, and other poetic devices. As for the reader, Collingwood claimed that in order to understand what a poem expresses, the reader should experience it for herself and come to grasp what is expressed by recreating in herself the emotions of the artist that are expressed in the poem. So the poet is not *aiming* to arouse our emotions, but if he does a good job, he will have created a poem that will in fact enable us to recreate his emotions and feel them for ourselves. Thus Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” expresses the poet’s longing for an unchangeable world of art and beauty far away from “the weariness, the fever, and the fret” of our mundane world, and as we read the poem, we imagine the poet’s situation and come to experience the emotions with which he responds to it.

To my mind, it is very important to remember that the concept of art as a personal expression of emotion originated in Romanticism. Keats’ Ode is a paradigm of expression because in it the poet – or rather his persona – is expressing some complex emotional state that he is actually experiencing

and in which there is development in this emotional state from the beginning to the end of the poem. This is what expression is in its fullest sense: an achievement by an artist, not a mode of experiencing by a reader or listener.

Now, you might think it’s easier for poetry to express emotions in this way, because the poet can express his thoughts and desires and intentions in the words of the poem. But what about music? There are a number of ways in which music can express emotions. The doggy theory rightly suggests that we can experience music as resembling the vocal expressions and the motor activity – including expressive bodily gestures and action tendencies – that characterize particular emotions. We can also hear in it certain physiological changes, such as an agitated heart-beat or irregular breathing or panting. But music can also to some extent express the appraisals in emotion: we can hear in the music when things are going along in a regular, pleasant way, and when they take a dive. There are also many ways in which music can express desire, aspiration, or striving. A theme may struggle to achieve resolution, fail, try again, fail again, try a second time, and finally achieve closure. Or one theme may gradually and with apparent difficulty transform into a theme with a different character.

The most straightforward examples of musical expression come from Romantic *lieder* (songs), where there are words that help to disambiguate what is being expressed. It seems true to say, for example, that the protagonist of Schubert’s “Gute Nacht” is *expressing* his unhappiness at having been rejected by his beloved as well as a sense of defeat and abandonment. There are moments when his mood briefly lifts, as he remembers his past hopes, but he always sinks back into gloom. In the final verse, he bids a tender, nostalgic farewell to the beloved, before descending once again into hopelessness. The “Winterreise” is of course both an actual and a psychological journey. But even this first song is a mini-drama in itself: the wanderer’s emotions shift and change from beginning to the end of the song. From the first bars, the funereal D minor harmonies, the descending notes of the piano accompaniment and the harsh dissonance on the penultimate harmony of the cadence express right away that we are in a dark cold world both physically and psychologically. We hear the wanderer trudging

along in the repeated chords of the piano accompaniment, which continue throughout the piece. The repetitive character of the accompaniment seems to mirror his obsessive thinking about what he has left behind. (It is perhaps not fanciful to hear the accompaniment as expressing what's going on in the protagonist's subconscious.) There is a momentary (watery) ray of sun when F major briefly appears and the melody begins to rise instead of fall as the wanderer remembers happier days: "*Das Mädchen sprach von Liebe, die Mutter gar von Eh*" ("The maiden spoke of love, her mother even of marriage"). But then the minor tonality and the downward movement of the melody take over again. In the 4th and final verse D minor changes to D major with the words "*Will dich im Traum nicht stören, wär Schad um deine Ruh.*" ("I will not disturb your dreams; it would be a shame to spoil your rest.") As Youens (1991) points out, much of the dream-like magical quality in the effect comes from the fact that the half-step movement from F to E, which is such an important feature throughout the song, becomes a whole step F sharp to E once we move into D major. Suddenly a hopeful vista seems to open that had been closed off before. The wanderer nostalgically recalls his beloved and in his imagination tenderly tells her that he will not awaken her but will instead inscribe "*Gute Nacht*" on the gate, as he departs, so that she will know that he was thinking of her. But as he repeats "*An dich hab' ich gedacht*" ("I thought of you") a second time, the piece sinks back into the tonic D minor along with darkness and despair.

Collingwood claims that if a work of art expresses an emotion (in his quasi-technical sense), it clarifies that emotion for the understanding. In this example, there is a dramatic "speaker" of the words, and it is *his* emotions that are getting clarified, although of course the protagonist could be a stand-in for the composer himself. The words of the song express – articulate and elucidate – the protagonist's emotions in just the same way as the dramatic speaker of Keats' Ode. But the music also makes its own powerful contribution to what's expressed or articulated by the song.

Earlier I suggested that emotions are *processes* and that our emotional life occurs in "streams." It seems reasonable, then, to think that music,

which is itself a process or a series of processes occurring in "streams," would be peculiarly well-suited to mirror emotions. And in fact, as Langer was aware, music can indeed mirror the "streams" of emotional experience: the various interrelated currents that combine and separate, ambiguities between one emotion and another, blends of emotion, and the way one emotion gradually or suddenly transmutes into another. Music can convey how our emotional reactions shift and change: how things seem to be going from good to bad or from bad to good. And music can convey a sense that desires have been gratified or disappointed, and a sense that memories have engulfed a person or been swept away. We saw how this can happen in our brief examination of "*Gute Nacht*." There we were able to detect various interactions between what the protagonist is expressing in words and what is being expressed through musical means. What's even more interesting, however, is that some "pure" or "absolute" music can express the emotions of a protagonist in a very similar way.

Music, says Edward T. Cone, has an "expressive potential" (1974, p. 171) able to be realized in different ways in different contexts, but setting broad limits on what a musical work can express. So, to use Davies' example, the expressive potential of a piece can be a movement from grief to joy, from difficulties which are faced and overcome, or with a direful fate to which one becomes resigned. The possibilities are extensive, but they don't include just anything. In particular they do not permit joy turning into grief, or a sunny life that turns sour.

But why should we interpret music as "mirroring" emotional processes rather than processes in inanimate nature: clouds followed by the sun or a stormy sea gradually calming down? In the case of "*Gute Nacht*," the question is easily answered: the poem is all about the protagonist's emotions; he's expressing them in words and the music seems to reinforce or comment on what he's saying. But what about "pure" instrumental music? The answer is that in the nineteenth century Romantic tradition, it was thought normal and reasonable for music without words to express the emotions of characters or composers.²⁰ Indeed, new forms or adaptations of old ones – nocturnes, impromptus, tone poems and program music of all sorts – were created partly

in order to increase the possibilities of emotional expressiveness. When Schumann wrote music expressing the conflict between his two personae, Florestan and Eusebius, when Shostakovich imprinted his signature motif on symphonies and string quartets, when Mahler composed symphonies that morphed into mini-operas or oratorios, they are following a Romantic tradition of expressing the self (and its various personae) in their music.

Not all expressive music is populated with personae who are expressing their emotions, however. If we're listening to an Impressionist work of program music ("La Mer"), we know we should not be looking for a persona in the music (although one could interpret this piece as somebody's *impression* of the sea, rather than a straightforward pictorial characterization of the sea.) If we know we are listening to a Baroque character piece ("La Superbe"), then it's reasonable to hear a particular type of person in the music, but not reasonable to think we are experiencing an outpouring of emotion by that person. Sometimes, we'll know we are entitled to find a persona in a work of instrumental music because the composer has given us an evocative title, such as Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy*. But even where there is no special hint, it is reasonable to interpret certain kinds of Romantic instrumental music as expressions of emotion in a persona, because that was how composers of the time thought of (some of) their compositions.²¹

The *Wanderer Fantasy* is not the only late work of Schubert's in which we find the theme of the "wanderer," who is an outcast from the world just like the protagonist of *Winterreise*. Cone has argued that the A flat *Moment Musical* op. 94 no. 6 "dramatizes the injection of a strange, unsettling element into an otherwise peaceful situation"²² (Cone 1986, p. 26). This idea has great "metaphorical resonance" in Anthony Newcomb's phrase, suggesting the idea of the stranger or outsider, the "Fremdling" of Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck's poem "Der Wanderer," which Schubert set to music as a song that later he used as the theme for the adagio of the *Fantasy*. The *Schubert Song Companion* describes the *Fantasy* as working out in purely instrumental form "the prototype of the alienated man, the refugee from life and fate, who is the central figure of the song cycles and of so many songs of the last years"

(Reed 1985, p. 138). This reading is not merely derived from the association between the Schubert song and the *Fantasy* but is given musical corroboration by the juxtaposition of the tonic C major in the powerful, energetic first section of the piece with the extraordinary C sharp minor of the "Wanderer" theme in the second section. Charles Fisk writes: "The fantasy is an exuberant, virtuosic work under the spell of a melancholy song, whose melancholy it ultimately overcomes" (Fisk 2001, p. 68).

Fisk has made a particular study of the "trope" of the wanderer or outcast in Schubert's late music. For example, in the first movement of the Piano Sonata D 960 in B flat there is a harmonic "outsider," embodied in the strange trill on G flat which interrupts the cheerful ambulatory music that opens the piece. Fisk describes how the music seems to dramatize a search for reintegration of this "alien" element, as the music wanders into far distant keys, and he tells a psychologically convincing tale in which the wanderings are those of a persona, whom he identifies for various reasons with the composer himself, who is seeking to be integrated into the "normal" group. Fisk's underlying premise is that there are suggestions in Schubert's cyclic forms and tonal structures of larger dramatic structures, in which there are agents or personae expressing complex emotions and desires.

Once we hear the structure of a piece of music as a psychological as well as a musical structure, then we are able to hear in it patterns of feeling, as Langer stressed. Moreover we can hear in it not only the effects noticed by the doggy theorists but more complex emotions such as yearning, nostalgia, and resignation, all prime examples of Romantic emotions. And it is no surprise that we are moved by such expressions, because they are not just appearances but have psychological reality.²³

5 How does Music Arouse Emotions in Listeners?

According to "reader-response" theory, the interpretation of a literary work is in large part a function of the reader's response to it. There are many varieties of reader-response theory, not all of them having much to do with the emotions.

Elsewhere, however (Robinson 2005), I have defended a version of reader-response theory according to which there are at least some literary works that cannot be properly understood unless we respond to them emotionally in an appropriate way.²⁴ I think the same thing is true much more generally of our understanding of music. As we'll see shortly, having our emotions aroused in appropriate ways can help us to grasp both the *structure or form* of a musical piece, and also what it *expresses*. The expression of emotion in music is particularly moving because we don't just *recognize* that someone is expressing melancholy or nostalgia, but are actually brought to *feel* something similar: music has direct effects on our physiology and on our "action tendencies." In order to show that this is true, however, I must first make good on the claim that music can indeed arouse the emotions of its listeners.

There are many different ways in which music arouses emotions and the emotions aroused by these different mechanisms are not all the same. Indeed this is probably the main reason why music is so often described as expressively ambiguous: different emotions are aroused more-or-less simultaneously by different mechanisms. One way in which music arouses emotions is by means of personal associations – the "they're playing our song" phenomenon – but such associations won't be generalizable and hence are of limited theoretical interest.²⁵ More interesting are the emotions we feel when we are moved by the sheer beauty of a melody or of a harmonic progression. Certainly part of our emotional response to music is sheer pleasure at its beauty, its inventiveness, its "craftsmanship."²⁶

But there are many other ways too in which music arouses our emotions. In his groundbreaking book *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Leonard Meyer pointed out that it is possible to understand a complex piece of music by having your emotions aroused at the right times and in the right ways, even if you have no idea how to analyze the piece like a trained music theorist.²⁷ What he has in mind is that the structure of a piece written in "classical" style (the best example is perhaps sonata form) implies that certain events will happen in a certain order and we become surprised, disappointed, anxious, bewildered, uncertain or suspenseful and even upset when things don't go as we expect. Similarly, when

everything turns out all right in the end by means of some clever compositional devices of the composer, we feel relief, satisfaction, contentment, calm. If we feel the "right" emotions at the "right" moments during the unfolding of the music – puzzlement when the key doesn't change when it's supposed to or bewilderment when, as in the middle of the first movement of the Schubert B flat sonata D 960, the key changes are so extensive and unpredictable that tonally we become "lost," or satisfaction when finally the tonic reasserts itself – then we have *understood* the music even if we cannot verbalize our experience.

If Meyer is right, then feeling how the music shifts and turns as it unfolds is a way of understanding musical structure. It is also a way of drawing attention to important events in the music – those that puzzle, disappoint, surprise, or satisfy us – in a bodily way: that's what emotions do. So even if we cannot explain verbally why we felt as we did, the emotions we experience in following the structure of a piece alert us to what's important. We can then go back and "cognitively monitor" our experience of the piece and try to figure out (cognitively) why the music made us feel the way it did. In other words, just as in reading a realistic nineteenth century novel, such as *Anna Karenina*, our emotional responses highlight important events and encourage us to reflect upon their significance in the novel as a whole, so, in listening to Schubert's last sonata, our emotional responses highlight important *musical* events and encourage us to reflect upon their significance in the musical structure as a whole. It will probably be only after repeated listenings that we come to grasp this significance, just as we most likely don't figure out the structure of *Anna Karenina* on a first reading.

Why is it that an unexpected key change or a prolonged excursion into keys distant from the tonic should arouse emotions? We can relate to Anna and her fate because she is a human being just like us in a difficult situation that we recognize as difficult. But why get upset when the tonic remains absent for longer than we expect? The tonic is not a teenage son or daughter, out after "curfew," whose absence might well evoke powerful emotions. Nico Frijda's theory of emotion can help us here. He suggests that emotion is generated by appraisals of match or mismatch with the agent's goals or interests. The psychologists of

music John Sloboda and Patrik Juslin have taken up his idea, arguing that the tonal system within which most of the composers of the Classic and Romantic periods worked, provides “a set of dimensions that establish psychological distance from a ‘home’ or ‘stability’ point” (Sloboda and Juslin 2001, p. 92). Moving closer to this “resting point” reduces tension and moving away from it in general increases tension. So we get emotionally worked up when things don’t turn out as we expect and we are emotionally satisfied when they do. As Ella Fitzgerald sings, “How strange the change from major to minor!” When we have become accustomed to going along in the major key and suddenly there is a shift into the minor, we are shaken up emotionally: things are not going the way we’d been led to expect, and what’s more, they seem to be moving into a darker realm. Although in musical cases of this sort, the match or mismatch with our “goals and interests” doesn’t matter very much to our well-being, we have learned to respond in a similar way *when-ever* our desires or expectations are thwarted and *whenever* they are satisfied. It is in general adaptive to be on the look-out when things are not going as expected or as desired, especially when the change seems to be for the worse. The reaction to unexpected events in music such as the shift from major to minor is most likely a spin-off from a generally adaptive pattern of response.

In my brief discussion of the emotions I noted that typically an emotional response is the result of an “affective appraisal” of the environment: I’m afraid when I’m faced with a threat, and angry when something offends me. I cheer up when things are going well and I get sad when they aren’t going so well. In my discussion so far about how music arouses emotions, I’ve been talking about our reactions *to the music*: I get pleasure from its beauty; I’m surprised by its harmonic changes; I’m satisfied when it returns “home” to the tonic; I feel momentary alarm when it moves from major to minor mode. Of course, in order to experience these emotions I must have some grasp of the musical style in which the music has been composed, otherwise I won’t be surprised or pleased by the musical development. It’s only if I have some background knowledge about how pieces of this sort generally unfold that my emotions direct my attention to certain aspects of the music.

But music also seems to arouse our emotions in a more direct bodily way. If a piece of music makes me *sad*, it’s not because I’ve made an affective appraisal that things in general are bad. Nothing bad has happened: my mother hasn’t died; I haven’t lost my job. The only relevant change in the world is that music is playing. We can explain some of these emotional effects as the result of “affective appraisals” of the music itself in the way I suggested above. But there still seem to be direct physiological effects of music that can’t be accounted for in this way. There is plenty of empirical evidence from studies of Western music that sad music makes people sad and happy music makes them happy; calm and serene music calms people down, and edgy, restless music makes them edgy and restless. Quite apart from evidence from people’s self-reports (which can’t be totally reliable as we don’t have any incorrigible access to our states of mind), there is evidence that different kinds of music produce different *autonomic* and *hormonal* activity. And what about the effects of rhythm, which interestingly, seem to be more widespread over different cultures than the effects of harmony, which tend to be restricted to specific cultures with specific harmonic systems? It seems clear from personal experience that music with different characteristic rhythms produces different kinds of movement and “action tendencies” in its listeners. Try dancing a jig to a funeral march or pretending to be a galloping horse while listening attentively to a slow and graceful minuet. Recently the neuroscientist Daniel Levitin has explained how the enjoyment of rhythm involves the cerebellum in the “reptilian” brain, which is involved with timing and co-ordinating body movements, but is also massively connected to emotional centres in the brain, notably the amygdale and the frontal lobes. His results suggest that rhythm and meter can be emotionally arousing in a direct way, which bypasses the cortex.

If you spend time with a depressed person, you find yourself getting depressed in a process of “emotional contagion.” You begin to *mirror* the person’s posture, tone of voice, facial expression and so on, and without realizing it, you yourself start to feel depressed. There is now intriguing evidence that so-called “mirror neurons” respond virtually the same way when we see a facial expression of a particular emotion and when we

make that expression ourselves, when we feel our leg being touched with a stick and when we watch someone else having their leg touched with a stick. It seems that in cases of emotional contagion, emotion is communicated via these mirrored bodily movements. These movements are then *felt* as the corresponding emotion. This phenomenon helps to explain people's capacity for *empathy* or *feeling with* other people. Music, however, operates in a more immediate way. It *directly affects* the autonomic and motor systems, so that our bodies respond to the music of a funeral march or a jig, with the physiological and motor activity characteristic of melancholy or cheerfulness. There's nothing to be melancholy or cheerful *about*: it's not an appraisal of the world that has made us sad or happy; it's the direct effect of the music on our autonomic and motor systems.

Indeed, numerous psychological studies of *mood* use music with a particular expressive character to establish a mood before going on to measure the effects of mood on memory and various cognitive functions, such as decision-making. Only a few emotions or moods figure in this research: usually it is sad and happy, anxious and calm that recur over and over again in the literature on music. One might wonder why being in a particular motor and autonomic state is automatically treated as a mood state? After all, when one is tired or running a race or digging in the garden, one is also in a particular physiological state. Interestingly, however, many of the "mood" studies that rely on music have shown that the physiological states listeners find themselves in as a result of listening to music with a particular character – happy, sad, restless, calm – do in fact have many of the characteristic consequences of bona fide emotions. They have effects on memory: an event memorized when one was in a certain mood is easier to recollect when music reflecting that mood is being played. They have effects on behavior: decision-time, distance approximation, and writing speed (behaviors believed to be affected by mood). They have effects on perception: happy (sad) music makes people quicker to detect happy (sad) facial expressions in other people and quicker to recognize words like "happy" ("sad"). So it looks as if music doesn't just affect our physiology and our motor systems; it really does have the power to put us in certain emotional states. As William James long

ago suspected, and as Paul Ekman and others have recently established empirically, altering the facial expression or posture or bodily movement or action tendencies characteristic of some emotion seems to be enough to induce the emotion itself, or at least that's what the subjects of these experiments testify.²⁸

Finally, we respond to music emotionally when we respond with understanding to what it expresses. When I hear Schubert's wanderer lamenting his lost love, I respond to him as I do to a character in a novel or, better, a play: I am moved by his sorrow and feel with him in his grief and sense of abandonment. My reaction is emotional because my reactions to people in real life who are expressing their emotions is also emotional, provided I sense that they are part of my "group." That's just the way human beings are made. I may not actually identify with the protagonist; perhaps I simply feel pity for him. And if, as I have suggested, we hear at least some "pure" instrumental music as the wordless expression of emotion in a persona in the music, then it's not surprising that we respond to the music emotionally as if it were a wordless song: we respond emotionally because we are responding to someone else's expression of emotion (even if it is only an imagined character in a sonata). We assume this person is someone to whom we can "relate" because we find ourselves relating to him (or her); we find ourselves reacting emotionally.

Now, just as some readers are no doubt irritated by Anna Karenina instead of compassionate towards her, no doubt some people simply feel annoyed by Schubert's wanderer: why doesn't he just find another girl or drown himself in a mill-stream and put himself out of his misery?²⁹ However, it is very hard to sustain an emotional reaction of annoyance when there is so much in the music that tends to make us melancholy, if not grief-stricken. Much of music's effect occurs below the level of consciousness. First the rhythm: our motor systems respond to the trudging music: it puts us in the state of mind in which one moves in this way. I trudge when I'm gloomy and/or heavy-laden. Second, the harmony: the dissonances in the initial melody in the initial piano line are disturbing: they not only grab our attention; they cause a frisson of unease: the smooth harmony has been interrupted by something rough-edged and

jagged-sounding. Finally the melody. Here I think we have to be a little speculative. One of the important aspects of emotion that I mentioned was “action tendency,” or, more generally, as Frijda puts it, “states of action readiness.” In listening with understanding to Schubert’s music, we hear the vocal melody moving downwards as if succumbing to something weighty; in verse three we hear the familiar melody in the voice turn and move upwards at the end of the phrase, as though striving upwards for something, but in verse four (despite being initially in the major key) the melody reverts to the falling pattern, and in the final passage in the piano vocal melody and harmony come together in the trudging D minor theme. It seems as if somehow the movement of the melody reflects the movements of the wanderer’s state of mind, and that this somehow imparts itself to us. We feel the way that the wanderer feels because the rhythm, the harmony and the melody all conspire to make us feel the same way.

Earlier I noted that having our emotions aroused in appropriate ways can help us to grasp the *structure* or *form* of a musical piece. I hope it is now clear that it can also help us understand what it *expresses*. The emotions aroused by music can alert us to important features of musical expression. But musical expression is particularly moving because we don’t just *recognize* that someone is expressing melancholy or nostalgia, but are actually brought to *feel* something similar: music has direct effects on our physiology and on our “action tendencies.”

Neuroscientific research has shown that when people get “the chills” while listening to their favourite music, the brain is in a very similar state to that of a heroin high.³⁰ Clearly music has powerful emotional effects on listeners. Part of this is no doubt pleasure in the beauty, expressiveness and cleverness of the piece. Part of it is due to the emotions we feel as we follow the structure of the piece. Part of it is a result of feeling *with* what’s being expressed in a piece. But one thing I haven’t so far stressed is that the various emotions aroused in these different ways may be all working together to intense effect. Alternatively they may all be working in different ways and producing an ambiguous effect that is overwhelming partly because we cannot grasp why it is that we feel so deeply.

In “Gute Nacht” perhaps all the different mechanisms reinforce each other: the falling melody, the minor key, and the trudging rhythm may make the listener feel somewhat gloomy, while the protagonist’s predicament as expressed in the song may arouse gloomy sympathy, and the dissonances may arouse feelings of angst, so that the resulting emotion is, generally speaking, one of gloomy angst. On the other hand, the various different mechanisms will typically arouse *different* emotions. Indeed the typical emotional response to “Gute Nacht” is not in fact one of unadulterated gloom: it also includes profound pleasure in the song’s beauty and admiration for its well-crafted structure. Now, profound pleasure in the beauty of a melody, anxiety at unexpected structural developments and gloomy sympathy for a despairing persona, *when experienced simultaneously*, could well induce a powerful but ambiguous emotional state, and perhaps this state is particularly powerful just because it is so difficult for cognitive monitoring to grasp its source.³¹

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Carol L. Krumhansl, “An Exploratory Study of Musical Emotions and Psychophysiology,” *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology* 51 (1997), 336–52; Patrik N. Juslin, “Communicating Emotion in Music Performance: A Review and Theoretical Framework,” in Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (eds.) *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 309–37; Klaus R. Scherer and Marcel R. Zentner, “Emotional Effects of Music: Production Rules,” in Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (eds.) *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 361–92; and Daniel J. Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Dutton, 2006), chapter 6.
- 2 The New Grove Dictionary describes some of Francois Couperin’s harpsichord pieces as follows: “*La Garnier*, in its apposition of dark-hued textures and expressive *ports de voix*, combining solemnity with tenderness, conjures up a personality at once noble and sensitive. Forqueray, self-assured and brilliant, is epitomized in a proud Allemande movement, a firmly treading bass against an alert, driving treble. And turning to *La Couperin*, [which “may be a self-portrait” of the composer,] one may read into its spacious

- sequences, its firm linear quality and strong tonal architecture a high seriousness and dedication to music." Edward Higginbottom, "François Couperin, (*le grand*)," in Stanley Sadie (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 4 (London: Macmillan, 1980), 868.
- 3 I say "himself" because the great composers of the past have all been male. Why this is so is an interesting sociological question. One of the main reasons is that women lacked the opportunities – for conducting, for playing in an orchestra, for learning music theory "first-hand" as a practising musician – that are necessities for the composer to attain any degree of competence at all.
 - 4 See Kivy 1984 and Robinson 1994.
 - 5 Of course the word "representation" is often used more generally to mean any kind of symbolic relation whatsoever, but it is confusing to use the term in this general way. It is best restricted to the model of pictorial representation where it is confined to a relation between a picture and some individual thing rather than a quality such as "red" or "sad." Goodman 1968 makes this distinction very clearly, although his views on how to analyze what representation and expression are have been subject to harsh criticism.
 - 6 For example, Agawu 1991 and Hatten 1994.
 - 7 The view is summarized in Robinson 2004. It is laid out more comprehensively in Robinson 2005.
 - 8 My view is indebted to many sources, prominent among which are James 1981, Damasio 1994, LeDoux 1996, and Ekman 2003.
 - 9 If I were a big strong aggressive man, maybe it would put me into an attacking posture, but I'm not.
 - 10 If I discover that it's beloved Joe, this will initiate a further affective appraisal and a different emotion, such as joyous delight.
 - 11 See e.g. John Hospers 1954–5.
 - 12 Goodman (1968) thinks that expression should not be restricted to psychological states. In his view, works of architecture can express fluidity or weight; music can express glitter or wateriness. In my view, however, it is incorrect to extend the term "express" to non-psychological qualities. A piece of music that "expresses wateriness" is simply a piece that conveys how (some) water sounds or moves. Better to say the music "sounds like water" or "conveys a sense of wateriness."
 - 13 The theories were developed independently but were first published in the same year, 1980. See Kivy 1989 and Davies 1994. Kivy has since rejected the position he defended in Kivy 1980 and 1989. See Kivy 2002.
 - 14 Levinson 1996 points out that neither Kivy nor Davies is very clear about what they think musical expressiveness is. They spend most of their time explaining the grounds on which (they think) we attribute expressive qualities to music.
 - 15 But Kivy suggests that all expressive conventions may have originated in contours.
 - 16 See Karl and Robinson 1995 for a detailed discussion of this point.
 - 17 I recently had an opportunity to see Bill Viola's slow-motion video installation, *The Quintet of Remembrance*. Five actors perform different emotions (sadness, anger and so on) via gradually changing facial expressions and gestures. The people in the group do not appear to interact, and there is no hint as to why they are expressing the emotions that they do. Thus we have no idea whether the facial expressions are mere poses or whether they reflect any psychological reality and if so, what it is. I suppose the piece might be intended to be interestingly enigmatic, but I found it at once lifeless and melodramatic. Yet this installation is supposed to get its expressiveness in just the same way as the doggy theory claims music does. (Interestingly, there is no music accompanying the video.)
 - 18 See Karl and Robinson (1995) on Shostakovich's Tenth.
 - 19 I am over-simplifying a little in this paragraph. Levinson, like Davies, is trying to analyze *expressiveness* in music rather than *expression*. But, unlike Davies, Levinson analyzes expressiveness in terms of what can be *heard as an expression*. In Robinson 2007b (p. 39) I argue that expression and expressiveness are "related but conceptually distinct phenomena," and try to show how exactly they are related.
 - 20 I am not arguing that all music, or even all expressive music, expresses the emotions of a protagonist in the music. The idea that music and the other arts are expressions of emotion in this way is largely a creation of Romanticism, and the artistic expression of emotion "in the fullest sense," as I have called it, may be largely confined to the Romantic and post-Romantic eras.
 - 21 For further discussion and defense of this view, see Robinson 2007a. For excellent examples of this type of criticism see Newcomb 1984 and 1997.
 - 22 Newcomb has christened these kinds of story structures in music "plot archetypes." They are analogous to the somewhat abstract structures discovered by Tzvetan Todorov 1969 in his examination of the plot structures of the stories in the *Decameron*.
 - 23 Even if the psychology is that of a fictional character such as the protagonist in *Winterreise*.

- 24 What "an appropriate way" turns out to be is of course a difficult question. See Robinson 2005.
- 25 There is, however, evidence that events memorized under the effect of a certain mood are recalled more easily when that mood is evoked by music.
- 26 These are the only emotions Kivy thinks music can arouse. See Kivy 1990.
- 27 Like Wolfgang Iser 1980, Meyer is a reader/listener response theorist who seems to think that there is in fact an "ideal" reader/listener whose (ideal) reactions give "the meaning" of the work.
- 28 Among the evidence is Strack et al 1988 and Paul Ekman 2003. James 1981 (pp. 1077–8) forestalls them. In Robinson 2005 I argue that more is required to turn a "mood" into an "emotion" proper. I argue there that listeners interpret – they "cognitively monitor" – the situation they find themselves in, which in this case is listening to music with a particular structure and a particular expressive character, and they interpret the rather vague mood state they are experiencing as a more specific emotion, in a way consistent with the overall musical context, including what the music expresses, what emotions the structure of the music elicits, how much pleasure they are deriving as well as any personal associations they may have to the music.
- 29 See Schubert's song-cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin*.
- 30 See Blood and Zatorre 2001.
- 31 My thanks to Cathryn Long for very useful comments. All the issues I address in this paper are discussed in more detail in Robinson 2005.

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Fearing Fictions

Kendall L. Walton

[T]he plot [of a tragedy] must be structured . . . that the one who is hearing the events unroll shudders with fear and feels pity at what happens: which is what one would experience on hearing the plot of the Oedipus.

*Aristotle, Poetics*¹

I

Charles is watching a horror movie about a terrible green slime. He cringes in his seat as the slime oozes slowly but relentlessly over the earth destroying everything in its path. Soon a greasy head emerges from the undulating mass, and two beady eyes roll around, finally fixing on the camera. The slime, picking up speed, oozes on a new course straight toward the viewers. Charles emits a shriek and clutches desperately at his chair. Afterwards, still shaken, Charles confesses that he was “terrified” of the slime. *Was he?*

This question is part of the larger issue of how “remote” fictional worlds are from the real world. There is a definite barrier against *physical* interactions between fictional worlds and the real world. Spectators at a play are prevented from rendering aid to a heroine in distress. There is no way that

Charles can dam up the slime, or take a sample for laboratory analysis.² But, as Charles’s case dramatically illustrates, this barrier appears to be psychologically transparent. It would seem that real people can, and frequently do, have psychological attitudes toward merely fictional entities, despite the impossibility of physical intervention. Readers or spectators detest Iago, worry about Tom Sawyer and Becky lost in the cave, pity Willy Loman, envy Superman – and Charles fears the slime.

But I am skeptical. We do indeed get “caught up” in stories; we often become “emotionally involved” when we read novels or watch plays or films. But to construe this involvement as consisting of our having psychological attitudes toward fictional entities is, I think, to tolerate mystery and court confusion. I shall offer a different and, in my opinion, a much more illuminating account of it.

This issue is of fundamental importance. It is crucially related to the basic question of why and how fiction is important, why we find it valuable, why we do not dismiss novels, films, and plays as “mere fiction” and hence unworthy of serious

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attention. My conclusions in this paper will lead to some tentative suggestions about this basic question.

II

Physical interaction is possible only with what actually exists. That is why Charles cannot dam up the slime, and why in general real people cannot have physical contact with mere fictions. But the nonexistence of the slime does not prevent Charles from fearing it. One may fear a ghost or a burglar even if there is none; one may be afraid of an earthquake that is destined never to occur.

But a person who fears a nonexistent burglar *believes* that there is, or at least might be, one. He believes that he is in danger, that there is a possibility of his being harmed by a burglar. It is *conceivable* that Charles should believe himself to be endangered by the green slime. He might take the film to be a live documentary, a news flash. If he does, naturally he is afraid.

But the situation I have in mind is the more usual and more interesting one in which Charles is not deceived in this straightforward way. Charles knows perfectly well that the slime is not real and that he is in no danger. Is he afraid even so? He says that he is afraid, and he is in a state which is undeniably similar, in some respects, to that of a person who is frightened of a pending real-world disaster. His muscles are tensed, he clutches his chair, his pulse quickens, his adrenalin flows. Let us call this physiological/psychological state "quasi-fear." Whether it is actual fear (or a component of actual fear) is the question at issue.

Charles's state is crucially different from that of a person with an ordinary case of fear. The fact that Charles is fully aware that the slime is fictional is, I think, good reason to deny that what he feels is fear. It seems a principle of common sense, one which ought not to be abandoned if there is any reasonable alternative, that fear³ must be accompanied by, or must involve, a belief that one is in danger. Charles does not believe that he is in danger; so he is not afraid.

Charles might try to convince us that he was afraid by shuddering and declaring dramatically that he was "*really terrified*." This emphasizes the intensity of his experience. But we need not deny

that he had an intense experience. The question is whether his experience, however intense, was one of fear of the slime. The fact that Charles, and others, call it "fear" is not conclusive, even if we grant that in doing so they express a truth. For we need to know whether the statement that Charles was afraid is to be taken literally or not.

More sophisticated defenders of the claim that Charles is afraid may argue that Charles *does* believe that the green slime is real and is a real threat to him. There are, to be sure, strong reasons for allowing that Charles realizes that the slime is only fictional and poses no danger. If he didn't we should expect him to flee the theater, call the police, warn his family. But perhaps it is *also* true that Charles believes, in some way or "on some level," that the slime is real and really threatens him. It has been said that in cases like this one "suspends one's disbelief," or that "part" of a person believes something which another part of him disbelieves, or that one finds oneself (almost?) believing something one nevertheless knows to be false. We must see what can be made of these notions.

One possibility is that Charles *half* believes that there is a real danger, and that he is, literally, at least half afraid. To half believe something is to be not quite sure that it is true, but also not quite sure that it is not true. But Charles has *no* doubts about whether he is in the presence of an actual slime. If he half believed, and were half afraid, we would expect him to have *some* inclination to act on his fear in the normal ways. Even a hesitant belief, a mere suspicion, that the slime is real would induce any normal person seriously to consider calling the police and warning his family. Charles gives no thought whatever to such courses of action. He is not *uncertain* whether the slime is real; he is perfectly sure that it is not.

Moreover, the fear symptoms that Charles does exhibit are not symptoms of a mere suspicion that the slime is real and a queasy feeling of half fear. They are symptoms of the certainty of grave and immediate danger, and sheer terror. Charles's heart pounds violently, he gasps for breath, he grasps the chair until his knuckles are white. This is not the behavior of a man who realizes basically that he is safe but suffers flickers of doubt. If it indicates fear at all, it indicates acute and overwhelming terror. Thus, to compromise on this issue, to say that Charles half

believes he is in danger and is half afraid, is not a reasonable alternative.

One might claim that Charles believes he is in danger, but that this is not a hesitant or weak or half belief, but rather a belief of a special kind – a “gut” belief as opposed to an “intellectual” one. Compare a person who hates flying. He realizes, in one sense, that airplanes are (relatively) safe. He says, honestly, that they are, and can quote statistics to prove it. Nevertheless, he avoids traveling by air whenever possible. He is brilliant at devising excuses. And if he must board a plane he becomes nervous and upset. I grant that this person believes at a “gut” level that flying is dangerous, despite his “intellectual” belief to the contrary. I grant also that he is really afraid of flying.

But Charles is different. The air traveler performs *deliberate* actions that one would expect of someone who thinks flying is dangerous, or at least he is strongly inclined to perform such actions. If he does not actually decide against traveling by air he has a strong inclination to do so. But Charles does not have even an inclination to leave the theater or call the police. The only signs that he might really believe he is endangered are his more or less automatic, nondeliberate, reactions: his pulse rate, his sweaty palms, his knotted stomach, his spontaneous shriek.⁴ This justifies us in treating the two cases differently.

Deliberate actions are done for reasons; they are done because of what the agent wants and what he thinks will bring about what he wants. There is a presumption that such actions are reasonable in light of the agent’s beliefs and desires (however unreasonable the beliefs and desires may be). So we postulate beliefs or desires to make sense of them. People also have reasons for doing things that they are inclined to do but, for other reasons, refrain from doing. If the air traveler thinks that flying is dangerous, then, assuming that he wants to live, his actions or tendencies thereto are reasonable. Otherwise, they probably are not. So we legitimately infer that he does believe, at least on a “gut” level, that flying is dangerous. But we don’t have to make the same kind of sense of Charles’s automatic responses. One doesn’t have reasons for things one doesn’t *do*, like sweating, increasing one’s pulse rate, knotting one’s stomach (involuntarily). So there is no need to attribute beliefs (or desires) to

Charles which will render these responses reasonable.⁵ Thus, we can justifiably infer the air passenger’s (“gut”) belief in the danger of flying from his deliberate behavior or inclinations, and yet refuse to infer from Charles’s automatic responses that he thinks he is in danger.

Someone might reply that at moments of special crisis during the movie – e.g., when the slime first spots Charles – Charles “loses hold of reality” and, *momentarily*, takes the slime to be real and really fears it. These moments are too short for Charles to think about doing anything; so (one might claim) it isn’t surprising that his belief and fear are not accompanied by the normal inclinations to act.

This move is unconvincing. In the first place, Charles’s quasi-fear responses are not merely momentary; he may have his heart in his throat throughout most of the movie, yet without experiencing the slightest inclination to flee or call the police. These long-term responses, and Charles’s propensity to describe them afterwards in terms of “fear,” need to be understood even if it is allowed that there are moments of real fear interspersed among them. Furthermore, however tempting the momentary-fear idea might be, comparable views of other psychological states are much less appealing. When we say that someone “pitied” Willy Loman or “admired” Superman, it is unlikely that we have in mind special moments during his experience of the work when he forgot, momentarily, that he was dealing with fiction and felt flashes of actual pity or admiration. The person’s “sense of reality” may well have been robust and healthy throughout his experience of the work, uninterrupted by anything like the special moments of crisis Charles experiences during the horror movie. Moreover, it may be appropriate to say that someone “pities” Willy or “admires” Superman even when he is not watching the play or reading the cartoon. The momentary-*fear* theory, even if it were plausible, would not throw much light on cases in which we apparently have other psychological attitudes toward fictions.

Although Charles is not really afraid of the fictional slime depicted in the movie, the movie might nevertheless produce real fear in him. It might cause him to be afraid of something other than the slime it depicts. If Charles is a child, the movie may make him wonder whether there

might not be real slimes or other exotic horrors *like* the one depicted in the movie, even if he fully realizes that the movie-slime itself is not real. Charles may well fear these suspected actual dangers; he might have nightmares about them for days afterwards. (*Jaws* caused a lot of people to fear sharks which they thought might really exist. But whether they were afraid of the fictional sharks in the movie is another question.)

If Charles is an older movie-goer with a heart condition, he may be afraid of the movie itself. Perhaps he knows that any excitement could trigger a heart attack, and fears that the movie will cause excitement, e.g., by depicting the slime as being especially aggressive or threatening. This is real fear. But it is fear of the depiction of the slime, not fear of the slime that is depicted.

Why is it so natural to describe Charles as afraid of the slime, if he is not, and how *is* his experience to be characterized? In what follows I shall develop a theory to answer these questions.

III

Propositions that are, as we say, "true in (the world of)" a novel or painting or film are *fictional*. Thus it is fictional that there is a society of tiny people called "Lilliputians." And in the example discussed above it is fictional that a terrible green slime is on the loose. Other fictional propositions are associated not with works of art but with games of make-believe, dreams, and imaginings. If it is "true in a game of make-believe" that Johnnie is a pirate, then fictionally Johnnie is a pirate. If someone dreams or imagines that he is a hero, then it is fictional that he is a hero.

Fictional truths⁶ come in groups, and each of these groups constitutes a "fictional world." The fact that fictionally there was a society of tiny people and the fact that fictionally a man named "Gulliver" was a ship's physician belong to the same fictional world. The fact that fictionally a green slime is on the loose belongs to a different one. There is, roughly, a distinct fictional world corresponding to each novel, painting, film, game of make-believe, dream, or daydream.

All fictional truths are in one way or another man-made. But there are two importantly different ways of making them, and two corresponding

kinds of fictional truths. One way to make a proposition fictional is simply to imagine that it is true. If it is fictional that a person is a hero because he imagines himself to be a hero, then this fictional truth is an *imaginary* one. Imagining is not always a deliberate, self-conscious act. We sometimes find ourselves imagining things more or less spontaneously, without having decided to do so. Thoughts pop into our heads unbidden. Dreams can be understood as simply very spontaneous imaginings.

Fictional truths of the second kind are established in a less direct manner. Participants in a game of mud pies may decide to recognize a principle to the effect that whenever there is a glob of mud in a certain orange crate, it is "true in the game of make-believe," i.e., it is fictional, that there is a pie in the oven. This fictional truth is a *make-believe* one. The principles in force in a given game of make-believe are, of course, just those principles which participants in the game recognize or accept, or understand to be in force.

It can be make-believe that there is a pie in the oven without anyone's imagining that there is. This will be so if there is a glob in the crate which no one knows about. (Later, after discovering the glob, a child might say, "There was a pie in the oven all along, but we didn't know it.") But propositions that are known to be make-believe are usually imaginary as well. When kids playing mud pies do know about a glob in the crate by virtue of which it is make-believe that a pie is in the oven, they imagine that there is a pie in the oven.

Principles of make-believe that are in force in a game need not have been formulated explicitly or deliberately adopted. When children agree to let globs of mud "be" pies they are in effect establishing a great many unstated principles linking make-believe properties of pies to properties of globs. It is implicitly understood that the size and shape of globs determine the make-believe size and shape of pies; it is understood, for example, that make-believedly a pie is one handspan across just in case that is the size of the appropriate glob. It is understood also that if Johnnie throws a glob at Mary then make-believedly Johnnie throws a pie at Mary. (It is *not* understood that if a glob is 40 per cent clay then make-believedly a pie is 40 per cent clay.)

It is not always easy to say whether or not someone does accept, implicitly, a given principle of make-believe. But we should notice that much of the plausibility of attributing to children implicit acceptance of a principle linking the make-believe size and shape of pies to the size and shape of globs rests on the dispositional fact that if the children should discover a glob to have a certain size or shape they would imagine, more or less automatically, that a pie has that size or shape. The children are disposed to imagine pies as having whatever size and shape properties they think the relevant globs have. In general, nondeliberate, spontaneous imagining, prompted in a systematic way by beliefs about the real world, is an important indication of implicit acceptance of principles of make-believe. I do not claim that a person disposed to imagine, nondeliberately, that *p* when he believes that *q* necessarily recognizes a principle of make-believe whereby if *q* then it is make-believe that *p*. It must be his understanding that whenever it is true that *q*, whether he knows it or not, it will be fictional that *p*. It may be difficult to ascertain whether this is his understanding, especially since his understanding may be entirely implicit. But the spontaneity of a person's imagining that *p* on learning that *q* strongly suggests that he thinks of *p* as having been fictional even before he realized that *q*.

A game of make-believe and its constituent principles need not be shared publicly. One might set up one's own personal game, adopting principles that no one else recognizes. And at least some of the principles constituting a personal game of make-believe may be implicit, principles which the person simply takes for granted.

Representational works of art generate make-believe truths. *Gulliver's Travels* generates the truth that make-believedly there is a society of six-inch-tall people. It is make-believe that a green slime is on the loose in virtue of the images on the screen of Charles's horror movie. These make-believe truths are generated because the relevant principles of make-believe are understood to be in force. But few such principles are ever formulated, and our recognition of most of them is implicit. Some probably seem so natural that we assume them to be in force almost automatically. Others we pick up easily through unreflective experience with the arts.⁷

IV

[The actor] on a stage plays at being another before a gathering of people who play at taking him for that other person.

Jorge Luis Borges⁸

Compare Charles with a child playing an ordinary game of make-believe with his father. The father, pretending to be a ferocious monster, cunningly stalks the child and, at a crucial moment, lunges viciously at him. The child flees, screaming, to the next room. The scream is more or less involuntary, and so is the flight. But the child has a delighted grin on his face even while he runs, and he unhesitatingly comes back for more. He is perfectly aware that his father is only "playing," that the whole thing is "just a game," and that only make-believedly is there a vicious monster after him. He is not really afraid.

The child obviously belongs to the fictional world of the game of make-believe. It is make-believe that the monster lunges, not into thin air, but at the child. Make-believedly the child is in grave and mortal danger. And when the child screams and runs, make-believedly he knows he is in danger and is afraid. The game is a sort of theatrical event in which the father is an actor portraying a monster and the child is an actor playing himself.

I propose to regard Charles similarly. When the slime raises its head, spies the camera, and begins oozing toward it, it is make-believe that Charles is threatened. And when as a result Charles gasps and grips his chair, make-believedly he is afraid. Charles is playing a game of make-believe in which he uses the images on the screen as props. He too is an actor impersonating himself. In this section I shall explain this proposal in detail. My main arguments for it will come later.

Charles differs in some important respects from an ordinary on-stage, self-portraying actor. One difference has to do with what makes it make-believe that Charles is afraid. Facts about Charles generate (*de re*) make-believe truths about him; in this respect he is like an actor portraying himself on stage. But the sorts of facts about Charles which do the generating are

different. Make-believe truths about Charles are generated at least partly by what he thinks and feels, not just by how he acts. It is partly the fact that Charles is in a state of quasi-fear, the fact that he feels his heart pounding, his muscles tensed, etc., which makes it make-believe that he is afraid. It would not be appropriate to describe him as "afraid" if he were not in some such state.⁹

Charles's quasi-fear is not responsible, by itself, for the fact that make-believedly it is the *slime* he fears, nor even for the fact that make-believedly he is afraid rather than angry or excited or merely upset. Here Charles's (actual) beliefs come into play. Charles believes (he knows) that make-believedly the green slime is bearing down on him and he is in danger of being destroyed by it. His quasi-fear results from this belief.¹⁰ What makes it make-believe that Charles is afraid rather than angry or excited or upset is the fact that his quasi-fear is caused by the belief that make-believedly he is in danger. And his belief that make-believedly it is the slime that endangers him is what makes it make-believe that the slime is the object of his fear. In short, my suggestion is this: the fact that Charles is quasi-afraid as a result of realizing that make-believedly the slime threatens him generates the truth that make-believedly he is afraid of the slime.¹¹

An on-stage actor, by contrast, generates make-believe truths solely by his acting, by his behavior. Whether it is make-believe that the character portrayed is afraid or not depends just on what the actor says and does and how he contorts his face, regardless of what he actually thinks or feels. It makes no difference whether his actual emotional state is anything like fear. This is just as true when the actor is playing himself as it is when he is portraying some other character. The actor may find that putting himself into a certain frame of mind makes it easier to act in the appropriate ways. Nevertheless, it is how he acts, not his state of mind, that determines whether make-believedly he is afraid.

This is how our conventions for theater work, and it is entirely reasonable that they should work this way. Audiences cannot be expected to have a clear idea of an actor's personal thoughts and feelings while he is performing. That would require knowledge of his off-stage personality and of recent events that may have affected his mood (e.g., an argument with his director or his

wife). Moreover, acting involves a certain amount of dissembling; actors hide some aspects of their mental states from the audience. If make-believe truths depended on actors' private thoughts and feelings, it would be awkward and unreasonably difficult for spectators to ascertain what is going on in the fictional world. It is not surprising that the make-believe truths for which actors on stage are responsible are understood to be generated by just what is visible from the galleries.

But Charles is not performing for an audience. It is not his job to get across to anyone else what make-believedly is true of himself. Probably no one but him much cares whether or not make-believedly he is afraid. So there is no reason why his actual state of mind should not have a role in generating make-believe truths about himself.

It is not so clear in the monster game what makes it make-believe that the child is afraid of a monster. The child *might* be performing for the benefit of an audience; he might be *showing* someone, an onlooker, or just his father, that make-believedly he is afraid. If so, perhaps he is like an on-stage actor. Perhaps we should regard his observable behavior as responsible for the fact that make-believedly he is afraid. But there is room for doubt here. The child experiences quasi-fear sensations as Charles does. And his audience probably has much surer access to his mental state than theater audiences have to those of actors. The audience may know him well, and the child does not try so hard or so skillfully to hide his actual mental state as actors do. It may be perfectly evident to the audience that the child has a case of quasi-fear, and also that this is a result of his realization that make-believedly a monster is after him. So it is not unreasonable to regard the child's mental state as helping to generate make-believe truths.

A more definite account of the situation is possible if the child is participating in the game solely for his own amusement, with no thought of an audience. In this case the child himself, at least, almost certainly understands his make-believe fear to depend on his mental state rather than (just) his behavior.¹² In fact, let us suppose that the child is an undemonstrative sort who does not scream or run or betray his "fear" in any other especially overt way. His participation in the game is purely passive. Nevertheless the child does experience quasi-fear when make-believedly

the monster attacks him, and he still would describe himself as being “afraid” (although he knows that there is no danger and that his “fear” isn’t real). Certainly in this case it is (partly) his quasi-fear that generates the make-believe truth he expresses when he says he is “afraid.”

My proposal is to construe Charles on the model of this undemonstrative child. Charles may, of course, exhibit his “fear” in certain observable ways. But his observable behavior is not meant to show anyone else that make-believedly he is afraid. It is likely to go unnoticed by others, and even Charles himself may be unaware of it. No one, least of all Charles, regards his observable behavior as generating the truth that make-believedly he is afraid.

V

It is clear enough now what makes it make-believe that Charles fears the slime, assuming that make-believedly he does fear the slime. But more needs to be said in support of my claim that this is a make-believe truth. What needs to be established is that the relevant principle of make-believe is accepted or recognized by someone, that someone understands it to be in force. I contend that Charles, at least, does so understand it.

It is clear that Charles imagines himself to be afraid of the slime (though he knows he is not). He thinks of himself as being afraid of it; he readily describes his experience as one of “fear” – once he has a chance to catch his breath. So it is at least imaginary (and hence fictional) that he fears the slime.

Charles’s act of imagining himself afraid of the slime is hardly a deliberate or reflective act. It is triggered more or less automatically by his awareness of his quasi-fear sensations. He is simply disposed to think of himself as fearing the slime, without deciding to do so, when during the movie he feels his heart racing, his muscles tensed, and so forth. It is just such a disposition as this, we recall [...], that goes with implicit recognition of a principle of make-believe. If a child is disposed to imagine a pie to be six inches across when he discovers that that is the size of a glob of mud, this makes it reasonable to regard him as recognizing a principle whereby the glob’s being that size makes it make-believe that the pie is also.

Similarly, Charles’s tendency to imagine himself afraid of the slime when he finds himself in the relevant mental state constitutes persuasive grounds for attributing to him acceptance of a principle whereby his experience makes it make-believe that he is afraid.¹³

Several further considerations will increase the plausibility of this conclusion. First, I have claimed only that Charles recognizes the principle of make-believe. There is no particular reason why anyone else should recognize it, since ordinarily only Charles is in a position to apply it and only he is interested in the make-believe truth that results. Others might know about it and realize how important it is to Charles. But even so the principle clearly is in important respects a personal one. It differs in this regard from the principles whereby an on-stage actor’s behavior generates make-believe truths, and also from those whereby images on the movie screen generate make-believe truths about the activities of the green slime. *These* principles are fully public; they are clearly (even if implicitly) recognized by everyone watching the play or movie. Everyone in the audience applies them and is interested in the resulting make-believe truths.

This makes it reasonable to recognize two distinct games of make-believe connected with the horror movie – a public game and Charles’s personal game – and two corresponding fictional worlds. The situation is analogous to that of an illustrated edition of a novel. Consider an edition of Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* which includes a drawing of Raskolnikov. The text of the novel, considered alone, establishes a fictional world comprising the make-believe truths that it generates, e.g., the truth that make-believedly a man named “Raskolnikov” killed an old lady. The illustration is normally understood not as establishing its own separate fictional world, but as combining with the novel to form a “larger” world. This larger world contains the make-believe truths generated by the text alone, plus those generated by the illustration (e.g., that make-believedly Raskolnikov has wavy hair and a receding chin), and also those generated by both together (e.g., that make-believedly a man with wavy hair killed an old lady). So we have two fictional worlds, one included within the other: the world of the novel and the world of the novel-plus-illustration.

Charles's state of mind supplements the movie he is watching in the way an illustration supplements what it illustrates. The movie considered alone establishes a fictional world consisting only of the make-believe truths that it generates (e.g., that make-believely there is a green slime on the loose). But Charles recognizes, in addition, a larger world in which these make-believe truths are joined by truths generated by Charles's experience as he watches the movie, and also by truths generated by the images on the screen and Charles's experience together. It is only in this more inclusive world that make-believely Charles fears the slime. (And it is the larger world that occupies Charles's attention when he is caught up in the movie.)

The analogy between Charles's case and the illustrated novel is not perfect. The novel-plus-illustration world is publicly recognized, whereas the fictional world established by the movie plus Charles's experience of it probably is not. Dolls provide an analogy which is better in this respect. Anyone who sees a doll of a certain sort will recognize that it generates the truth that make-believely there is a blonde baby girl. The doll, regarded simply as a sculpture to be observed from a distance, generates, make-believe truths such as this. But a child playing with the doll is playing a more personal game of make-believe, one in which she herself is a self-portraying actor and the doll serves as a prop. What she does with the doll generates make-believe truths, e.g., the truth that make-believely she is dressing the baby for a trip to town. Similarly, Charles uses the screen images as props in a personal game of make-believe in which he himself is a character. He plays his own game with the images. The screen images, of course, do not lend themselves to bring "dressed" or manipulated in all the ways that dolls do, and this limits the extent of Charles's participation in the game. But the relations and interactions between Charles and the images do generate a number of important make-believe truths: that make-believely Charles notices the slime and stares apprehensively at it, that make-believely it turns toward him and attacks, and that make-believely he is scared out of his wits.¹⁴

One source of uneasiness about my claim that make-believely Charles fears the slime may have been the impression that this can be so only if

Charles belongs to the fictional world of the *movie*. (The movie itself doesn't depict Charles, nor does it make any reference to him, so he doesn't belong to the movie-world.) My two-worlds theory shows that this impression is mistaken and hence that the uneasiness based on it is out of place.

I have portrayed Charles so far as participating rather automatically in his game of make-believe. But he might easily slip into participating deliberately. The naturalness of his doing so gives added support to my claim that Charles does recognize a make-believe world that he and the slime share, even when his participation is not deliberate. Suppose that during the movie Charles exclaims, deliberately, to a companion or to himself, "Yikes, here it comes! Watch out!" How are we to understand this verbal action? Certainly Charles is not seriously asserting that a slime is coming and warning himself or his companion of it. Presumably he is asserting that it is *make-believe* that a slime is coming. But the indexical, 'here', carries an implicit reference to the speaker. So Charles's exclamation shows that he takes it to be make-believe that the slime is headed toward *him*; it shows that he regards himself as coexisting with the slime in a make-believe world.

But this does not take us to the bottom of the matter. "Yikes!" and "Watch out!" are not assertions, and so not assertions of what make-believely is the case. Moreover, if in saying, "Here it comes," Charles were merely making an assertion about what make-believely is the case, he could well have made this explicit and exclaimed instead, "Make-believely the slime is coming!" or "The slime is coming, in the fictional world!" But these variants lack the flavor of the original. Charles's exclamatory tone is absurdly out of place when the make-believe status of the danger is made explicit. Compare how ridiculous it would be for an actor playing Horatio in a performance of *Hamlet* to exclaim, when the ghost appears, "Look, my lord, it comes, in the fictional world of the play!"

The comparison is apt. For Charles is doing just what actors do, *pretending* to make an assertion. He is pretending to assert (seriously) that the slime is headed his way. (Pretending to assert this is not incompatible with actually asserting that make-believely the slime is coming. Charles might be doing both at once.) In my terms,

Charles understands his utterance of 'Here it comes!' to generate the truth that make-believedly he asserts (seriously) that the slime is coming. He is playing along with the fiction of the movie, incorporating it into a game of make-believe of his own. This makes it obvious why it would not do to say, "Here it comes, in the fictional world!" Saying that is simply not (normally) how one would pretend to assert that a slime is (really) coming. The rest of Charles's verbal behavior is now easily explainable as well. In saying "Yikes!" and "Watch out!" he is pretending to express amazement or terror and pretending to issue a (serious) warning; make-believedly he is doing these things.

We have now arrived at the solution to a pair of puzzles. Why is it that in everyday conversation we regularly omit phrases like 'in the fictional world' and 'in the novel', whereas we rarely omit other intentional operators such as 'It is believed that', 'Jones wished that', 'Jones denies that'? Why do we so naturally say just "Tom and Becky were lost in a cave" rather than "In the novel Tom and Becky were lost in a cave," whereas it would be almost unheard of to shorten "Jones wishes that a golden mountain would appear on the horizon" to simply "A golden mountain will appear on the horizon" (even if the context makes it clear that Jones's wishes are the subject of conversation)?

The explanation lies in our habit of playing along with fictions, of make-believedly asserting, pretending to assert, what we know to be only make-believedly the case. We mustn't be too quick to assume that an utterance of '*p*' is merely an ellipsis for 'Make-believedly *p*' (or for 'In the novel *p*'). This assumption is wrong if the speaker make-believedly is asserting that *p*, rather than (or in addition to) asserting that make-believedly *p*, Charles's frantic, "Yikes, here it comes!" is an obvious case in point. A case only slightly less obvious is that of a person reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* who remarks, gravely and with an expression of deep concern, that Tom and Becky are lost in a cave.

I do not suggest that the omission of 'in the novel' is *never* a mere ellipsis. "Tom and Becky were lost in a cave" uttered by a critic analyzing the novel could easily have been expanded to "In the novel Tom and Becky were lost in a cave" without altering the character of the remark. The

critic probably is not pretending to assert that Tom and Becky were (actually) lost in a cave. But our habit of dropping fictional operators persists even in sober criticism, and testifies to the ease with which we can be induced to play along, deliberately, with a work of fiction.

In German the indicative mood is used ordinarily only when the speaker is committed to the truth of the sentence or clause in question. But fictional statements constitute a striking exception to this generalization; the indicative is used in fictional statements even though the speaker is *not* committed to their truth. (One says, for example, "*Robinson Crusoe hat einen Schiffbruch überlebt*," which is indicative, even though one is not claiming that there actually was a person named "Robinson Crusoe" who survived a shipwreck.)

The explanation is that speakers are often pretending to express their commitment to the truth of sentences or clauses in fictional contexts. So naturally they use the indicative mood in these cases; they speak as they would if they were not pretending. And the habit of using the indicative persists even when there is little or no such pretense.

VI

The treatment of Charles's "fear of the slime" suggested above can serve as a model for understanding other psychological attitudes ostensibly directed toward fictional things. When it is said that someone pities Willy Loman, or worries about Tom and Becky, or detests Iago, or envies Superman, what is said is probably not literally true.¹⁵ But the person is, actually, in a distinctive psychological (emotional?) state, even if that state is not pity or worry or hate or envy. And his being in this state is a result of his awareness of certain make-believe truths: that make-believedly Willy is an innocent victim of cruel circumstances, that make-believedly Tom and Becky might perish in the cave, that make-believedly Iago deceived Othello about Desdemona, that make-believedly Superman can do almost anything. The fact that the person's psychological state is as it is, and is caused by such beliefs, makes it make-believe that he pities Willy, worries about Tom and Becky, hates Iago, or envies Superman.

We have here a particularly intimate relation between the real world and fictional worlds. Insofar as make-believe truths are generated by a spectator's or reader's state of mind, he is no mere "external observer" of the fictional world. Ascertaining what make-believedly is true of himself is to a large extent a matter of introspection (or of whatever sort of "privileged access" one has to one's own beliefs and sensations). In fact, when Charles watches the horror movie, for example, introspection is involved in ascertaining not merely that make-believedly he is afraid of the slime, but also make-believe truths about the nature and progress of his fear. If it is make-believe that his fear is overwhelming, or that it is only momentary, this is so because his quasi-fear sensations are overwhelming, or are only momentary. Make-believedly his fear grows more or less intense, or becomes almost unbearable, or finally subsides, etc., as his quasi-fear feelings change in these ways. So it is by attention to the nature of his own actual experience that Charles is aware of make-believe truths about the nature of his fear. He follows the progress of his make-believe fear by introspection, much as one who is literally afraid follows the progress of his actual fear.

It would not be too far wrong to say that Charles actually experiences his make-believe fear. I don't mean that there is a special kind of fear, make-believe fear, which Charles experiences. What he actually experiences, his quasi-fear feelings, are not feelings of fear. But it is true of them that *make-believedly* they are feelings of fear. They generate *de re* make-believe truths about themselves, and so belong to the fictional world just as Charles himself does. What Charles actually experiences is such that make-believedly it is (an experience of) fear.

Cases like that of Charles contrast strikingly with others in which an actual person belongs to a fictional world. Consider a performance of William Luce's play about Emily Dickinson, *The Belle of Amherst*, in which Julie Harris plays Emily Dickinson. Suppose that Emily Dickinson herself, with the help of a time machine or a fortuitous reincarnation, is in the audience. In order to discover make-believe truths about herself, including what make-believedly she thinks and feels, Dickinson must observe Julie Harris's actions, just as any spectator must. It is as though she is watching another person, despite the fact that

that "person," the character, is herself. Dickinson has no special intimacy with make-believe truths about her own mental state.¹⁶ The situation is basically the same if Dickinson should replace Julie Harris in the lead role and act the part herself. She still must judge from her external behavior, from what spectators could observe, whether or not it is make-believe that she is afraid or worried or whatever – and she might easily be mistaken about how she looks to spectators. It is still as though she considers herself "from the outside," from the perspective of another person.

This is clearly not true of Charles. It is not as though Charles were confronting another person, a fictional version of himself, but rather as though he himself actually fears the slime. (Nevertheless, he does not.) Make-believe facts about his fear, especially the fact that make-believedly it is his, are portrayed to Charles in an extraordinarily realistic manner. And make-believe facts about our pity for Willy, our dislike of Iago, and so forth, are similarly vivid to us. We and Charles feel ourselves to be part of fictional worlds, to be intimately involved with the slime, or Willy, or with whatever constituents of fictional worlds are, make-believedly, objects of our feelings and attitudes.

We see, now, how fictional worlds can seem to us almost as "real" as the real world is, even though we know perfectly well that they are not. We have begun to understand what happens when we get emotionally "involved" in a novel or play or film, when we are "caught up in the story."

The theory I have presented is designed to capture intuitions lying behind the traditional ideas that the normal or desired attitude toward fiction involves a "*suspension of disbelief*," or a "*decrease of distance*." These phrases are unfortunate. They strongly suggest that people do not (completely) disbelieve what they read in novels and see on the stage or screen, that, e.g., we somehow accept it as fact that a boy named "Huckleberry Finn" floated down the Mississippi River – at least while we are engrossed in the novel. The normal reader does not accept this as fact, nor should he. Our disbelief is "suspended" only in the sense that it is, in some ways, set aside or ignored. We don't believe that there was a Huck Finn, but what interests us is the fact that *make-believedly* there was one, and that make-believedly he floated down the Mississippi and

did various other things. But this hardly accounts for the sense of “decreased distance” between us and fictions. It still has us peering down on fictional worlds from reality above, however fascinated we might be, for some mysterious reason, by what we see.

On my theory we accomplish the “decrease of distance” not by promoting fictions to our level but by descending to theirs. (More accurately, we *extend* ourselves to their level, since we do not stop actually existing when it becomes fictional that we exist.) *Make-believedly* we do believe, we know, that Huck Finn floated down the Mississippi. And make-believedly we have various feelings and attitudes about him and his adventures. Rather than somehow fooling ourselves into thinking fictions are real, we become fictional. So we end up “on the same level” with fictions. And our presence there is accomplished in the extraordinarily realistic manner that I described. This enables us to comprehend our sense of closeness to fictions, without attributing to ourselves patently false beliefs.

We are now in a position to expect progress on the fundamental question of why and how fiction is important. Why don’t we dismiss novels, plays, and films as “mere fiction” and hence unworthy of serious attention?

Much has been said about the value and importance of dreams, fantasy, and children’s games of make-believe.¹⁷ It has been suggested, variously, that such activities serve to clarify one’s feelings, help one to work out conflicts, provide an outlet for the expression of repressed or socially unacceptable feelings, prepare one emotionally for possible future crises by providing “practice” in facing imaginary crises. It is natural to presume that our experience of representational works of art is valuable for similar reasons. But this presumption is not very plausible, I think, unless something like the theory I have presented is correct.

It is my impression that people are usually, perhaps always, characters in their own dreams and daydreams. We dream and fantasize about ourselves. Sometimes one’s role in one’s dream-world or fantasy-world is limited to that of observing other goings-on. But to have even this role *is* to belong to the fictional world. (We must distinguish between being, in one’s dream, an observer of certain events, and merely “observ-

ing,” having, a dream about those events.) Similarly, children are nearly always characters in their games of make-believe. To play dolls or school, hobby horses or mud pies, is to be an actor portraying oneself.

I suggest that much of the value of dreaming, fantasizing, and making-believe depends crucially on one’s thinking of oneself as belonging to a fictional world. It is chiefly by fictionally facing certain situations, engaging in certain activities, and having or expressing certain feelings, I think, that a dreamer, fantasizer, or game player comes to terms with his actual feelings – that he discovers them, learns to accept them, purges himself of them, or whatever exactly it is that he does.

If I am right about this, people can be expected to derive similar benefits from novels, plays, and films only if it is fictional that they themselves exist and participate (if only as observers) in the events portrayed in the works, i.e., only if my theory is on the right track.

I find encouragement for these speculations in the deliberate use of role-playing in educational simulation games, and as a therapeutic technique in certain kinds of psychotherapy (e.g., Gestalt therapy). A therapist may ask his patient to pretend that his mother is present, or that some inanimate object is his mother, and to “talk to her.” He may then be asked to “be” the mother, and to say how he feels (when he “is” the mother), how he acts, what he looks like, etc. I will not venture an explanation of how such therapeutic techniques are effective, nor of why simulation games work. But whatever explanation is appropriate will, I suspect, go a long way toward explaining why we are as interested in works of fiction as we are, and clarifying what we get from them. The important place that novels, plays, and films have in our lives appears mysterious only on the supposition that we merely stand outside fictional worlds and look in, pressing our noses against an inviolable barrier. Once our presence within fictional worlds is recognized, suitable explanations seem within reach.

VII

A more immediate benefit of my theory is its capacity to handle puzzles. I conclude with the resolution of two more. First, consider a playgoer

who finds happy endings asinine or dull, and hopes that the play he is watching will end tragically. He “wants the heroine to suffer a cruel fate,” for only if she does, he thinks, will the play be worth watching. But at the same time he is caught up in the story and “sympathizes with the heroine”; he “wants her to escape.” It is obvious that these two apparent desires may perfectly well coexist. Are we to say that the spectator is *torn* between opposite interests, that he wants the heroine to survive and also wants her not to? This does not ring true. Both of the playgoer’s “conflicting desires” may be wholehearted. He may hope unreservedly that the work will end with disaster for the heroine, and he may, with equal singlemindedness, “want her to escape such an undeserved fate.” Moreover, he may be entirely aware of both “desires,” and yet feel no particular conflict between them.

My theory provides a neat explanation. It is merely make-believe that the spectator sympathizes with the heroine and wants her to escape. And he (really) wants it to be make-believe that she suffers a cruel end. He does not have conflicting desires. Nor, for that matter, is it make-believe that he does.

The second puzzle concerns why it is that works last as well as they do, how they can survive multiple readings or viewings without losing their effectiveness.¹⁸

Suspense of one kind or another is an important ingredient in our experience of most works: Will Jack, of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, succeed in ripping off the giant without being caught? Will Tom and Becky find their way out of the cave? Will Hamlet ever get around to avenging the murder of his father? What is in store for Julius Caesar on the Ides of March? Will Godot come?

But how can there be suspense if we already know how things will turn out? Why, for example, should Tom and Becky’s plight concern or even interest a reader who knows, from reading the novel previously, that eventually they will escape from the cave? One might have supposed that, once we have experienced a work often enough to learn thoroughly the relevant features of the plot, it would lose its capacity to create suspense, and that future readings or viewings of it would lack the excitement of the first one. But this frequently is not what happens. *Some* works, to be sure, fade quickly from exposure, and familiarity

does alter our experience in certain ways. But the power of many works is remarkably permanent, and the nature of their effectiveness remarkably consistent. In particular, suspense may remain a crucial element in our response to a work almost no matter how familiar we are with it. One may “worry” just as intensely about Tom and Becky while rereading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, despite one’s knowledge of the outcome, as would a person reading it for the first time. A child listening to *Jack and the Beanstalk* for the umpteenth time, long after she has memorized it word for word, may feel much the same excitement when the giant discovers Jack and goes after him, the same gripping suspense, that she felt when she first heard the story. Children, far from being bored by familiar stories, often beg to hear the same ones over and over again.

None of this is surprising on my theory. The child hearing *Jack and the Beanstalk* knows that make-believedly Jack will escape, but make-believedly she does *not* know that he will – until the reading of the passage describing his escape. She is engaged in her own game of make-believe during the reading, a game in which make-believedly she learns for the first time about Jack and the giant as she hears about them.¹⁹ It is her make-believe uncertainty (the fact that make-believedly she is uncertain), not any actual uncertainty, that is responsible for the excitement and suspense that she feels. The point of hearing the story is not, or not merely, to learn about Jack’s confrontation with the giant, but to play a game of make-believe. One cannot learn, each time one hears the story, what make-believedly Jack and the giant do, unless one always forgets in between times. But one can and does participate each time in a game of make-believe. The point of hearing *Jack and the Beanstalk* is to have the experience of being such that, *make-believedly*, one realizes with trepidation the danger Jack faces, waits breathlessly to see whether the giant will awake, feels sudden terror when he does awake, and finally learns with admiration and relief how Jack chops down the beanstalk, killing the giant.

Why play the same game over and over? In the first place, the game may not be exactly the same each time, even if the readings are the same. On one occasion it may be make-believe that the child is paralyzed by fear for Jack, overwhelmed by the gravity of the situation, and emotionally

drained when Jack finally bests the giant. On another occasion it may be make-believe that the child is not very seriously concerned about Jack's safety and that her dominant feelings are admiration for Jack's exploits, the thrill of adventure, and a sense of exhilaration at the final outcome. But even if the game is much the same from reading to reading, one's emotional needs may require the therapy of several or many repetitions.

Notes

- 1 Chapter 14. Translated by Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1967).
- 2 I examine this barrier in a companion piece to the present paper, "How Remote Are Fictional Worlds from the Real World?," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* [37, 1 (1978): 11–23].
- 3 By 'fear' I mean fear for oneself. Obviously a person can be afraid for someone else without believing that he himself is in danger. One must believe that the person for whom one fears is in danger.
- 4 Charles *might* scream *deliberately*. But insofar as he does, it is probably clear that he is only pretending to take the slime seriously. (See section V.)
- 5 Charles's responses are *caused* partly by a belief, though not the belief that he is in danger. (See section IV.) This belief is not a *reason* for responding as he does, and it doesn't make it "reasonable," in the relevant sense, to respond in those ways.
- 6 A "fictional truth" is the fact that a certain proposition is fictional.
- 7 I have developed the notion of make-believe truths and other ideas presented in this section more fully elsewhere, especially in "Pictures and Make-believe," *Philosophical Review*, LXXXI, 3 (July 1973): 283–319. Cf. also "Are Representations Symbols?," *The Monist*, LVIII, 2 (April 1974): 236–54. I should indicate that, in my view, there are no propositions "about" mere fictions, and hence none that are make-believe. It is make-believe not that Gulliver visited Lilliput, but that a man named "Gulliver" visited a place called "Lilliput." I shall occasionally ignore this point in the interest of simplicity, for example, when I write in section V as though the same slime resides in two different fictional worlds. Compare "How Remote Are Fictional Worlds from the Real World?," *op. cit.*, note 22.
- 8 From "Everything and Nothing," Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby, eds. (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 248.
- 9 It is arguable that the purely physiological aspects of quasi-fear, such as the increase of adrenalin in the blood, which Charles could ascertain only by clinical tests, are not part of what makes it make-believe that he is afraid. Thus one might want to understand 'quasi-fear' as referring only to the more psychological aspects of Charles's condition: the feelings or sensations that go with increased adrenalin, faster pulse rate, muscular tension, etc.
- 10 One can't help wondering why Charles's realization that make-believedly he is in danger produces quasi-fear in him, why it brings about a state similar to real fear, even though he knows he is not really in danger. This question is important, but we need not speculate about it here. For now we need only note that Charles's belief does result in quasi-fear, however this fact is to be explained.
- 11 This, I think, is at least approximately right. It is perhaps equally plausible, however, to say that the fact that Charles *believes* his quasi-fear to be caused by his realization that the slime endangers him is what makes it make-believe that his state is one of fear of the slime. There is no need to choose now between my suggestion and this variant.
- 12 Observers might, at the same time, understand his behavior alone to be responsible for his make-believe fear. The child and the observers might recognize somewhat different principles of make-believe.
- 13 These grounds are not conclusive. But the question of whether Charles accepts this principle is especially tricky, and there is reason to doubt that it can be settled conclusively. One would have to determine whether it is Charles's understanding that, if he were to have the quasi-fear sensations, etc., without realizing that he does and hence without imagining that he is afraid, it would still be fictional that he is afraid. If so, the fictional truth depends not on his imagining but on his quasi-fear, etc. It is hard to decide whether this is Charles's understanding, mainly because it is hard to conceive of his being ignorant of his quasi-fear sensations, etc. But insofar as I can get a grip on the question I think that the answer is affirmative.
- 14 One important difference between dolls and the screen images is that the dolls generate *de re* make-believe truths about themselves and the images do not. The doll is such that make-believedly *it* is a baby that is being dressed for a trip to town. But

a screen image is not such that make-believedly it (the image itself) is a green slime.

- 15 Assuming of course that the person realizes that he is dealing with a work of fiction. Even so, arguments are needed to show that such statements are not literally true, and I shall not provide them here. But it is plausible that pity, worry about, hate, and envy are such that one cannot have them without believing that their objects exist, just as one cannot fear something without believing that it threatens one. Yet even if one can, and does, envy a character, for example, it may *also* be make-believe that one does so, and this make-believe truth may be generated by facts of the sort my theory indicates.
- 16 I have in mind those make-believe truths about her mental state which are generated by what happens on stage. Dickinson is not only a charac-

ter in the play, but also a spectator. In the latter capacity she is like Charles; her actual mental state generates make-believe truths about herself. Dickinson is in a curiously ambiguous position. But it is not an uncommon one; people frequently have dreams in which they watch themselves ("from the outside") doing things.

- 17 A good source concerning make-believe games is Jerome L. Singer, et al., *The Child's World of Make-Believe* (New York: Academic Press, 1973).
- 18 David Lewis pointed out to me the relevance of my theory to this puzzle.
- 19 It is probably make-believe that someone (the narrator), whose word the child can trust, is giving her a serious report about a confrontation between a boy named "Jack" and a giant. Cf. my "Points of View in Narrative and Depictive Representation," *Noûs*, x, 1 (March 1976): 49-61.

Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism

Kendall L. Walton

Photography and the cinema ... satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism.

The photographic image is the object itself.

—ANDRÉ BAZIN, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image"

Every photograph is a fake from start to finish.

—EDWARD STEICHEN, "Ye Fakers"

1

Photographs and pictures of other kinds have various strengths and weaknesses. But photography is commonly thought to excel in one dimension especially, that of *realism*. André Bazin and many others consider photographs to be extraordinarily realistic, realistic in a way or to an extent which is beyond the reach of paintings, drawings, and other "handmade" pictures.

This attitude is encouraged by a rich assortment of familiar observations. Photographs of a crime are more likely to be admitted as evidence

in court than paintings or drawings are. Some courts allow reporters to sketch their proceedings but not to photograph them. Photographs are more useful for extortion; a sketch of Mr. X in bed with Mrs. Y—even a full color oil painting—would cause little consternation. Photographic pornography is more potent than the painted variety. Published photographs of disaster victims or the private lives of public figures understandably provoke charges of invasion of privacy; similar complaints against the publication of drawings or paintings have less credibility. I expect that most of us will acknowledge that, in general, photographs and paintings (and comparable nonphotographic pictures) affect us very differently. Compare Francisco Goya's etchings *The Disasters of War* with the Civil War photographs by Mathew Brady and his associates [...]. It is hard to resist describing the difference by saying that the photographs have a kind of immediacy or realism which the etchings lack. (This is not to deny that the etchings might equal or surpass the photographs in realism of some other sort, and it is certainly not to claim that the photographs are better.)

That photography is a supremely realistic medium may be the commonsense view, but—as Edward Steichen reminds us—it is by no means

universal. Dissenters note how unlike reality a photograph is and how unlikely we are to confuse the one with the other. They point to "distortions" engendered by the photographic process and to the control which the photographer exercises over the finished product, the opportunities he enjoys for interpretation and falsification. Many emphasize the expressive nature of the medium, observing that photographs are inevitably colored by the photographer's personal interests, attitudes, and prejudices.¹ Whether any of these various considerations really does collide with photography's claim of extraordinary realism depends, of course, on how that claim is to be understood.

Those who find photographs especially realistic sometimes think of photography as a further advance in a direction which many picture makers have taken during the last several centuries, as a continuation or culmination of the post-Renaissance quest for realism.² There is some truth in this. Such earlier advances toward realism include the development of perspective and modeling techniques, the portrayal of ordinary and incidental details, attention to the effects of light, and so on. From its very beginning, photography mastered perspective (a system of perspective that works, anyway, if not the only one). Subtleties of shading, gradations of brightness nearly impossible to achieve with the brush, became commonplace. Photographs include as a matter of course the most mundane details of the scenes they portray—stray chickens, facial warts, clutters of dirty dishes. Photographic images easily can seem to be what painters striving for realism have always been after.

[...]

But "photographic realism" is not very special if this is all there is to it: photographs merely enjoy *more* of something which other pictures possess in smaller quantities. These differences of degree, moreover, are not differences between photographs *as such* and paintings and drawings *as such*. Paintings *can* be as realistic as the most realistic photographs, if realism resides in subtleties of shading, skillful perspective, and so forth; some indeed are virtually indistinguishable from photographs. When a painter fails to achieve such realism up to photographic standards, the difficulty is merely technological, one

which, in principle, can be overcome—by more attention to details, more skill with the brush, a better grasp of the "rules of perspective." Likewise, photographs aren't necessarily very realistic in these sort of ways. Some are blurred and badly exposed. Perspective "distortions" can be introduced and subtleties of shading eliminated by choice of lens or manipulation of contrast. Photographic realism is not essentially unavailable to the painter, it seems, nor are photographs automatically endowed with it. It is just easier to achieve with the camera than with the brush.

Bazin and others see a much deeper gap between photographs and pictures of other kinds. This is evident from the marvelously exotic pronouncements they have sometimes resorted to in attempting to characterize the difference. Bazin's claim that the photographic image is identical with the object photographed is no isolated anomaly. He elaborates it at considerable length; it is echoed by Christian Metz; and it has resonances in the writings of many others.³

Such wild allegations might well be dismissed out of hand. It is simply and obviously false that a photographic image of Half Dome, for example, *is* Half Dome. Perhaps we shouldn't interpret Bazin's words literally.⁴ But there is no readily apparent nonliteral reading of them on which they are even plausible. Is Bazin describing what seems to the viewer to be the case rather than what actually is the case? Is he saying that, in looking at photographs, one has the impression, is under an illusion, of actually seeing the world, that a photographic image of Half Dome appears to be Half Dome?

There is no such illusion. Only in the most exotic circumstances would one mistake a photograph for the objects photographed. The flatness of photographs, their frames, the walls on which they are hung are virtually always obvious and unmistakable. Still photographs of moving objects are motionless. Many photographs are black-and-white. Even photographic motion pictures in "living color" are manifestly mere projections on a flat surface and easily distinguished from "reality." Photographs look like what they are: *photographs*.

Does our experience of a photograph *approach* that of having an illusion more closely than our

experiences of paintings do, even though not closely enough to qualify as an illusion? Possibly. But this is not what Bazin means. If it were, theater would qualify as even more realistic than photography. Theater comes as close or closer to providing genuine illusions than film does, it would seem. There are real flesh-and-blood persons on stage, and they look more like the people portrayed than do plays of light and dark on a flat screen. But Bazin regards the fact that photographs are produced “mechanically” as crucial to their special realism—and theatrical portrayals are not produced “mechanically” (see “OPI,” pp. 12 and 14). (Erwin Panofsky explicitly contrasts film with theater, as well as with painting.)⁵

Bazin seems to hold that photographs enjoy their special status just by virtue of being photographs, by virtue of their mechanical origins, regardless of what they look like. “No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the [photographic] image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model” (“OPI,” p. 15).

To add to the confusion, let us note that claims strikingly similar to Bazin’s observations about photography, and equally paradoxical, have been made concerning painting and other “handmade” representations, the very things Bazin and others mean to be distinguishing photography from!

When we point to [a painted] image and say ‘this is a man’ [s]trictly speaking that statement may be interpreted to mean that the image itself is a member of the class ‘man.’ ... [A stick which a child calls a horse] becomes a horse in its own right, it belongs in the class of ‘gee-gees’ and may even merit a proper name of its own.⁶

[A wooden robin poised on a bird-feeding station] does not say: Such is a robin! It is a robin, although a somewhat incomplete one. It adds a robin to the inventory of nature, just as in Madame Tussaud’s Exhibition the uniformed guards, made of wax, are ... intended ... to weirdly increase the staff of the institution.⁷

What, then, is special about photography?

There is one clear difference between photography and painting. A photograph is always a photograph of something which actually exists.

Even when photographs portray such nonentities as werewolves and Martians, they are nonetheless photographs of actual things: actors, stage sets, costumes. Paintings needn’t picture actual things. A painting of Aphrodite, executed without the use of a model, depicts nothing real.⁸ But this is by no means the whole story. Those who see a sharp contrast between photographs and paintings clearly think that it obtains no less when paintings depict actual things than when they do not, and even when viewers fully realize that they do. Let’s limit our examples to pictures of this kind. The claim before us is that photographs of Abraham Lincoln, for instance, are in some fundamental manner more realistic than painted portraits of him.

I shall argue that there is indeed a fundamental difference between photographs and painted portraits of Lincoln, that photography is indeed special, and that it deserves to be called a supremely realistic medium. But the kind of realism most distinctive of photography is not an ordinary one. It has little to do either with the post-Renaissance quest for realism in painting or with standard theoretical accounts of realism. It is enormously important, however. Without a clear understanding of it, we cannot hope to explain the power and effectiveness of photography.

2

Painting and drawing are techniques for producing pictures. So is photography. But the special nature of photography will remain obscure unless we think of it in another way as well—as a contribution to the enterprise of seeing. The invention of the camera gave us not just a new method of making pictures and not just pictures of a new kind: it gave us a new way of seeing.

Amidst Bazin’s assorted declarations about photography is a comparison of the cinema to mirrors. This points in the right direction.⁹ Mirrors are aids to vision, allowing us to see things in circumstances in which we would not otherwise be able to; with their help we can see around corners. Telescopes and microscopes extend our visual powers in other ways, enabling us to see things that are too far away or too small to be seen with the naked eye. Photography is an aid to vision also, and an especially versatile one.

With the assistance of the camera, we can see not only around corners and what is distant or small; we can also see into the past. We see long deceased ancestors when we look at dusty snapshots of them. To view a screening of Frederic Wiseman's *Titicut Follies* (1967) in San Francisco in 1984 is to watch events which occurred in 1967 at the Bridgewater State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Photographs are *transparent*. We see the world *through* them.

I must warn against watering down this suggestion, against taking it to be a colorful, or exaggerated, or not quite literal way of making a relatively mundane point. I am not saying that the person looking at the dusty photographs has the *impression* of seeing his ancestors—in fact, he doesn't have the impression of seeing them “in the flesh,” with the unaided eye. I am not saying that photography *supplements* vision by helping us to discover things that we can't discover by seeing.¹⁰ Painted portraits and linguistic reports also supplement vision in this way. Nor is my point that what we see—photographs—are *duplicates* or *doubles* or *reproductions* of objects, or *substitutes* or *surrogates* for them. My claim is that we *see*, quite literally, our dead relatives themselves when we look at photographs of them.

Does this constitute an extension of the ordinary English sense of the word “see”? I don't know; the evidence is mixed.¹¹ But if it is an extension, it is a very natural one. Our theory needs, in any case, a term which applies both to my “seeing” my great-grandfather when I look at his snapshot and to my seeing my father when he is in front of me. What is important is that we recognize a fundamental commonality between the two cases, a single natural kind to which both belong. We could say that I *perceive* my great-grandfather but do not *see* him, recognizing a mode of perception (“seeing-through-photographs”) distinct from vision—if the idea that I do perceive my great-grandfather is taken seriously. Or one might make the point in some other way. I prefer the bold formulation: the viewer of a photograph sees, literally, the scene that was photographed.

Slippery slope considerations give this claim an initial plausibility. No one will deny that we see through eyeglasses, mirrors, and telescopes. How, then, would one justify denying that a security guard sees via a closed circuit television monitor

a burglar breaking a window or that fans watch athletic events when they watch live television broadcasts of them? And after going this far, why not speak of watching athletic events via delayed broadcasts or of seeing the Bridgewater inmates via Wiseman's film? These last examples do introduce a new element: they have us seeing past events. But its importance isn't obvious. We also find ourselves speaking of observing through a telescope the explosion of a star which occurred millions of years ago.¹² We encounter various other differences also, of course, as we slide down the slope. The question is whether any of them is significant enough to justify digging in our heels and recognizing a basic theoretical distinction, one which we might describe as the difference between “seeing” (or “perceiving”) things and not doing so.¹³

Mechanical aids to vision don't necessarily involve *pictures* at all. Eyeglasses, mirrors, and telescopes don't give us pictures. To think of the camera as another tool of vision is to de-emphasize its role in producing pictures. Photographs are pictures, to be sure, but not ordinary ones. They are pictures through which we see the world.

To be transparent is not necessarily to be invisible. We see photographs themselves when we see through them; indeed it is by looking at *Titicut Follies* that we see the Bridgewater inmates. There is nothing strange about this: one hears both a bell and the sounds that it makes, and one hears the one by hearing the other. (Bazin's remarkable identity claim might derive from failure to recognize that we can be seeing both the photograph and the object: *what we see* are photographs, but we do see the photographed objects; so the photographs and the objects must be somehow identical.)

I don't mind allowing that we see photographed objects only *indirectly*, though one could maintain that perception is equally indirect in many other cases as well: we see objects by seeing mirror images of them, or images produced by lenses, or light reflected or emitted from them; we hear things and events by hearing the sounds that they make. One is reminded of the familiar claim that we see *directly* only our own sense-data or images on our retinas. What I would object to is the suggestion that indirect seeing, in any of these cases, is not really *seeing*, that *all* we actually see are sense-data or images or photographs.

One can see through sense-data or mirror images without specifically noticing them (even if, in the latter case, one notices the mirror); in this sense they *can* be invisible. One may pay no attention to photographic images themselves, concentrating instead on the things photographed. But even if one does attend especially to the photographic image, one may at the same time be seeing, and attending to, the objects photographed.

Seeing is often a way of finding out about the world. This is as true of seeing through photographs as it is of seeing in other ways. But sometimes we learn little if anything about what we see, and sometimes we value the seeing quite apart from what we might learn. This is so, frequently, when we see departed loved ones through photographs. We can't expect to acquire any particularly important information by looking at photographs which we have studied many times before. But we can *see* our loved ones again, and *that* is important to us.

3

What about paintings? They are not transparent. We do not see Henry VIII when we look at his portrait; we see only a representation of him. There is a sharp break, a difference of kind, between painting and photography.

Granted, it is perfectly natural to say of a person contemplating the portrait that he "sees" Henry VIII. But this is not to be taken literally. It is *fictional*, not true, that the viewer sees Henry VIII.¹⁴ It is equally natural to say that spectators of the Unicorn Tapestries see unicorns. But there are no unicorns; so they aren't really seeing any. Our use of the word "see," by itself, proves nothing.

A photograph purporting to be of the Loch Ness monster was widely published some years ago. If we think the monster really exists and was captured by the photograph, we will speak comfortably of seeing it when we look at the photograph. But the photograph turned out not to be of the monster but (as I recall) of a model, dredged up from the bottom of the lake, which was once used in making a movie about it. With this information we change our tune: what we see when we look at the photograph is not the monster but the model. This sort of seeing is like the ordinary variety in that only what exists can be seen.

What about viewers of the movie (which, let us assume, was a straightforward work of fiction)? They may speak of seeing the monster, even if they don't believe for a moment that there is such a beast. It is fictional that they see it; they actually see, with photographic assistance, the model used in the making of the film. It is fictional also that they see Loch Ness, the lake. And since the movie was made on location at Loch Ness, they really do see it as well.

Even when one looks at photographs which are not straightforward works of fiction, it can be fictional that one sees. On seeing a photograph of a long forgotten family reunion, I might remark that Aunt Mabel is grimacing. She is not grimacing *now* of course; perhaps she is long deceased. My use of the present tense suggests that it is *fictional* that she is grimacing (now). And it is fictional that I see her grimacing. In addition, I actually see, through the photograph, the grimace that she effected on the long past occasion of the reunion.

We should add that it is fictional that I see Aunt Mabel *directly*, without photographic assistance. Apart from very special cases, when in looking at a picture it is fictional that one sees something, it is fictional that one sees it not through a photograph or a mirror or a telescope but with the naked eye. Fictionally one is in the presence of what one sees.

One such special case is Richard Shirley's beautiful film *Resonant* (1969), which was made by filming still photographs (of an elderly woman, her house, her belongings). Sometimes this is obvious: sometimes, for example, we see the edges of the filmed photographs. When we do, it is fictional that we see the house or whatever through the photographs. But much of *Resonant* is fascinatingly ambiguous. The photographs are not always apparent. Sometimes when they are not, it is probably best to say that fictionally we see things directly. Sometimes we have the impression of fictionally seeing things directly, only to realize later that fictionally we saw them via still photographs. Sometimes, probably, there is no fact of the matter. Throughout, the viewer *actually* sees still photographs, via the film, whether or not he realizes that he does. And he actually sees the woman and the house through the photographs which he sees through the film.

We now have uncovered a major source of the confusion which infects writings about photography and film: failure to recognize and distinguish clearly between the special kind of seeing which actually occurs and the ordinary kind of seeing which only fictionally takes place, between a viewer's *really* seeing something *through a photograph* and his *fictionally* seeing something *directly*. A vague awareness of both, stirred together in a witches' cauldron, could conceivably tempt one toward the absurdity that the viewer is really in the presence of the object.

4

Let's look now at some familiar challenges to the idea that photography differs essentially from painting and that there is something especially realistic about photographs. Some have merit when directed against some versions of the thesis. They are irrelevant when the thesis is cashed out in terms of transparency.

The objection that a photograph doesn't look much like the actual scene, and that the experience of looking at a photograph is not much like the experience of observing the scene in ordinary circumstances, is easily dismissed. Seeing directly and seeing with photographic assistance are different modes of perception. There is no reason to expect the experiences of seeing in the two ways to be similar. Seeing something through a microscope, or through a distorting mirror, or under water, or in peculiar lighting conditions, is not much like seeing it directly or in normal circumstances—but that is no reason to deny that seeing in these other ways is *seeing*. The point is not that "a photograph shows us ... 'what we would have seen if we had been there ourselves.'" Joel Snyder and Neil Allen's objections to *this* view are well taken but beside the point ("PVR," p. 149, and see pp. 151–52). It may be *fictional* not that viewers of the photographs are shown what they *would* have seen but that they are actually there and see for themselves. Here, again, the confusion is caused by not distinguishing this from the fact that they actually do see via the photograph.

If the point concerned how photographs look, there would be no essential difference between photographs and paintings. For paint-

ings can be virtually indistinguishable from photographs. Suppose we see Chuck Close's superrealist *Self-Portrait* [. . .] thinking it is a photograph and learn later that it is a painting. The discovery jolts us. Our experience of the picture and our attitude toward it undergo a profound transformation, one which is much deeper and more significant than the change which occurs when we discover that what we first took to be an etching, for example, is actually a pen-and-ink drawing. It is more like discovering a guard in a wax museum to be just another wax figure. We feel somehow less "in contact with" Close when we learn that the portrayal of him is not photographic. If the painting is of a nude and if we find nudity embarrassing, our embarrassment may be relieved somewhat by realizing that the nudity was captured in paint rather than on film. My theory accounts for the jolt. At first we think we are (really) seeing the person portrayed; then we realize that we are not, that it is only fictional that we see him. However, even after this realization it may well continue to *seem* to us as though we are really seeing the person (with photographic assistance), if the picture continues to look to us to be a photograph. (In the case of the nude, this may account for the continuation of some of our original feelings of embarrassment.)¹⁵

[. . .]

We have here a case of *genuine* illusion. It really does look to us as though we are seeing someone via the medium of photography, and at first we are fooled. This is not the sort of illusion which so often is attributed to viewers despite overwhelming evidence that it almost never occurs. It does not appear to us that we see a person directly, one standing right in front of us.

We have genuine illusions also when we do see through a photograph but what we see through it is not what it seems to be. [. . .] [John de Andrea's *Man with Arms around a Woman* shows] a photograph through which we see not people but a life-sized sculpture [. . .]. Illusions of this kind are commonplace in film, and they contribute importantly to viewers' experiences. A detective in a movie surprises two thugs, pulls a gun, fires, and they drop. The viewer seems to be seeing these events via the film. He *does* see one man, an actor, approach two others, draw a gun, and pull the

trigger. But he doesn't see the one *kill* the others, since what was photographed was not an actual killing—the bullets were blanks, and the blood, ketchup. Still, the scene *looks* as though it were an actual killing which was filmed. The obvious considerations against the idea that a killing occurs *in the viewer's presence* are irrelevant to the illusion I have described. The sharp edges of the illuminated rectangle, the obvious flatness of the screen, the fuzziness of some images, the lack of color do nothing to keep it from seeming to the viewer that he is seeing an actual killing *via a photographic film* of it.

[...]

There are some superrealist paintings—Douglas Bond's *Ace I* [...], for instance—which have distinctly photographic stylistic traits but are rather obviously not photographs. Their photographic character is more pretense than illusion. It doesn't seem to the viewer that he sees through the photographs, but it may be fictional that he does. It may be fictional that *Ace I* is a photograph through which one sees a group of men walking in front of Pasadena City Hall.

The debate about whether photography is special sometimes revolves around the question of whether photographs are especially *accurate*. Some contend that photographs regularly falsify colors and distort spatial relationships, that a photograph of a running horse will portray it either as a blur, which it is not, or as frozen, which it also is not—and of course there is the possibility of retouching in the darkroom. It remains to be seen in what sense photographs can be inaccurate. Yet misleading they certainly can be, especially to viewers unfamiliar with them or with photographs of a given kind.

But why should this matter? We can be deceived when we see things directly. If cameras can lie, so can our eyes. To see something through a distorting mirror is still to see it, even if we are misled about it. We also see through fog, through tinted windshields, and through out-of-focus microscopes. The "distortions" or "inaccuracies" of photographs are no reason to deny that we see through them [...].

To underscore the independence of accuracy and transparency, consider a theatrical portrayal of actual events, an acting out in a courtroom of

events that led to a crime, for example. The portrayal might be perfectly accurate. Jurors might gain from it much correct information and no misinformation. Yet they certainly do not see the incident via the portrayal.

Is the difference between photographs and other pictures simply that photographs are *generally* more accurate (or less misleading), despite occasional lapses, that the photographic process is a "more reliable mechanism" than that of drawing or painting, and that therefore there is better *prima facie* reason to trust photographs? I doubt it. Consider a world in which mirrors are so flexible that their shapes change constantly and drastically and unpredictably.¹⁶ There seems no reason to deny that people see through these mirrors, notwithstanding the unreliability of the mechanism. Perhaps the mechanism is not a *knowledge*-producing one.¹⁷ If a person looks into a mirror and forms beliefs, on the basis of what he sees, about the things reflected in it and if those beliefs happen to be true, perhaps his beliefs do not constitute *knowledge*. But this does not mean that he does not *see* the reflected things.

[...]

Some objections focus on the idea that photographs owe their special status to their "mechanical," "automatic" origins, whereas paintings are "handmade." What is crucial is supposed to be the involvement of a *person* in the process. Several writers have managed to imply that people don't make photographs.¹⁸ In any case the remarkable realism of photographs is considered to derive not from what they look like but from how they come about.

On this point I agree. Why is it that we see Lincoln when we look at photographs of him but not when we look at his painted portrait? The answer requires an account of *seeing* (or better, an account of perception in general). I would subscribe to some variety of causal theory: to see something is to have visual experiences which are caused, in a certain manner, by what is seen. Lincoln (together with other circumstances) caused his photograph and, thus, the visual experiences of those who view it. This does not yet answer our question. For Lincoln caused his portrait as well as his photograph. The difference lies in the manner of the causation.

Putting things together, we get this: part of what it is to see something is to have visual experiences which are caused by it in a purely mechanical manner. Objects cause their photographs and the visual experiences of viewers mechanically; so we see the objects through the photographs. By contrast, objects cause paintings not mechanically but in a more “human” way, a way involving the artist; so we don’t see through paintings.

Objections leap to the fore. Photographs *are* made by people: “The [photographic] image is a crafted, not a natural, thing” (“PVR,” p. 151). Photographers and painters just use different tools in making their pictures, it seems—one uses a camera and the other a brush. In what sense, then, are our visual experiences caused mechanically when we look at photographs and not when we look at paintings?

Objectors frequently add that photographs do not present us with things as they really are but rather with the photographer’s conception or interpretation of them, that what we get from a photograph is not our own view of the world but his. A photograph, no less than a painting, has a subjective point of view.¹⁹

All this is beside the point. The manner in which things cause my visual experiences when I see them is not one which rules out a causal role for human beings. People often *show* me things and in other ways induce me to look this way or that. They affect what I can see or how I see it—by turning the lights on or off, by blowing smoke in my eyes, by constructing and making available eyeglasses, mirrors, and telescopes. Why not say that photographers, by making photographs, show me things and also enable me to see them? Surely that does not mean that *I* don’t really see them.

When I see, I may well get a sense of someone else’s conception or interpretation of what I see. If you point out something to me, I know that you consider it worth pointing out. I learn by seeing, when others affect my vision, what things are objects of their fears and fetishes, what they value, and what they deplore. It may not be inappropriate to speak of seeing things “through their eyes.” Yet I do see those things myself. Photography can be an enormously expressive medium—André Kertész’s *Distortion #157* [. . .] is certainly expressive—but this expressiveness does not render photographs opaque. If expressiveness is the

mark of *art*, photography’s credentials are beyond question. In *Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl, by careful selection and editing, “interprets” for us the Nazi Party Congress of 1934; she presents it as she construes it. It does not follow that we ourselves do not see Hitler’s airplane descending through the clouds, the thousands of marching troops and cheering spectators, and Hitler delivering tirades, even if the film fosters misconceptions about the things we see, inducing us to believe, for example, that the people we see were more enthusiastic about Hitler than they actually were. We can be aware, even vividly aware, of both the medium and the maker without either blocking our view of the object.

A final worry is that photography makes use of “conventions,” conventions which are built into the construction of the camera and our photographic processing techniques.²⁰ There is nothing sacrosanct about the system of perspective used in photography, it is argued; we just happen to have incorporated the one we did into the photographic process. Doesn’t this mean that the conventions of photography get between the viewer and the objects photographed, that the viewer must know the “language” of photography and “read” its symbols, and that therefore he cannot be said to see the objects through the photographs? Not at all. We could have a convention to the effect that mirrors used in certain contexts are to be warped in a certain manner (for example, convex mirrors which enable drivers to see around dangerous corners). The convention must be understood or internalized for one to “read” properly the mirror images. Nevertheless, one sees things through the mirrors.

5

With these objections laid to rest, it is time to tackle directly the question of what it is about photographs that makes them transparent. The reason why we see through photographs but not paintings is related to a difference in how we acquire information from pictures of the two kinds. Suppose an explorer emerges from a central African jungle with a batch of photographic dinosaur-pictures, purportedly shot in the bush and processed straightforwardly. The pictures (together with background information) may

convince us that there is a dinosaur lurking in the jungle. Alternatively, suppose that he emerges with a sheaf of dinosaur-sketches, purportedly drawn from life in the field. Again, we may be convinced of the existence of a dinosaur. Perhaps the photographs are more convincing than the drawings, but they needn't be. That is not the crucial difference between them; we *might* have better reason to trust the drawings than the photographs. The important difference is that, in the case of the sketches, we rely on the picture maker's belief that there is a dinosaur in a way in which we don't in the case of the photographs.

The drawings indicate to us what was in the jungle by indicating what the artist *thought* was there. We have reason to believe that the artist set out to draw what he saw and that he is a competent draftsman. Since the sketches show a dinosaur, we judge that he thought he saw one. Taking him to be a reliable observer, we judge that the dinosaur he thought he saw was actually there. We trust *his* judgment—our information about the dinosaur is secondhand.

We don't need to rely on the photographer's judgment in the same way. We may infer that he believes in the dinosaur, knowing that he was looking through the viewfinder when the pictures were taken. We might even assume that it is because he believed there was a dinosaur that the photographs exist or are as they are—we may assume that he aimed the camera where he did and snapped the shutter when he did because he thought he spotted a dinosaur. But no such inferences or assumptions are required for our judgment of the dinosaur's existence. Even if we know or suspect that he didn't see the dinosaur, that he left the camera on a tripod with an automatic triggering device, for instance, we may still infer the existence of the dinosaur from the photographs. In fact, if the photographs *do* convince us that he believed in the dinosaur, they do so because they convince us that there *was* a dinosaur, not the other way around.

We do need to make certain assumptions if we are going to trust the photographs: that the camera was of a certain sort, that no monkey business was involved in the processing, and so on. These may require our accepting the say-so of the photographer; we may have to trust him. And it could be that we are being taken for a ride. It is easy to see that *this* sort of reliance on the photographer

does not mean that we do not see through his photographs. In order to trust the evidence of my senses, I must always make certain assumptions about them and the circumstances in which they operate: that they are not influenced by hallucination-inducing drugs, that they are not being fed misinformation by an evil neurosurgeon, and so forth. I might rely on someone else's word in making these assumptions; I might consult a beneficent doctor. If he assures me that the system is operating normally, and it is, then I am seeing (or perceiving), notwithstanding my reliance on him.

The manner in which we trust the photographer when his photographs convince us of the existence of the dinosaur differs significantly from the manner in which we rely on the artist when we are persuaded by his sketches. Both sets of pictures have a counterfactual dependence on the scene in the jungle. In both cases, if the scene had been different—if there had been no dinosaur, for example—the pictures would have been different (and so would our visual experiences when we look at them). This is why, in both cases, given that the pictures are as they are, we can judge that the scene was as it was. But why are these counterfactuals true? A difference in the scene would have made a difference in the sketches because it would have made a difference in the artist's beliefs (and hence in the way he sketched or whether he sketched at all). But that is not why a difference in the scene would have made a difference in the photographs. *They* would have been different had the scene been different *even if* the photographer believed, and so aimed and snapped his camera, as he actually did. Suppose that the picture maker—artist or photographer—is hallucinating the dinosaur which he attempts to portray. The artist's sketches will show a dinosaur nonetheless, but the photographs will not. What the sketches show depends on what the artist thinks he sees, whether or not he is right; the actual scene in the jungle is, in *this* way, irrelevant to how his pictures turn out. But if the photographer thinks he sees a dinosaur and acts accordingly, what his photographs show is determined by what is really there before him, regardless of what he thinks. The artist draws his hallucination; the camera bypasses the photographer's hallucination and captures what is in the jungle.

A person's belief can be relevantly based on someone else's even if he doesn't realize that it is. If what convinces me of the dinosaur's existence is a painting which I take to be a photograph, I may suppose mistakenly that my belief is independent of the picture maker's and that I see the dinosaur. My grounds for my belief do not include his belief. But still, the absence of the dinosaur would have made a difference in the picture only because it would have made a difference in the artist's belief. Unbeknown to me, my belief is (relevantly) dependent on his, and I am wrong in thinking I see the dinosaur.

Not all theories of perception postulate a strong link between perceiving and believing.²¹ We needn't assume such a link. The essential difference between paintings and photographs is the difference in the manner in which they, not the beliefs of those who see them, are based on beliefs of their makers. Photographs are counterfactually dependent on the photographed scene even if the beliefs (and other intentional attitudes) of the photographer are held fixed.²² Paintings which have a counterfactual dependence on the scene portrayed lose it when the beliefs (and other intentional attitudes) of the painter are held fixed. Both the beliefs and the visual experiences which the viewer derives from a picture are dependent on the picture maker's beliefs in whichever manner the picture itself is. In order to see through the picture to the scene depicted, the viewer must have visual experiences which do not depend on the picture maker's beliefs in the way that paintings do. We can leave open the question of whether, to be seeing the scene, the viewer must have beliefs about it and what connection there may be between his visual experiences and his beliefs.²³

A familiar pair of science fiction examples may help to convince some that I am on the right track.²⁴ Suppose that a neurosurgeon disconnects Helen's eyes from her optic nerves and rigs up a device whereby he can stimulate the optic nerves at will. The doctor then stimulates Helen's nerves in ways corresponding to what he sees, with the result that she has "visual" experiences like ones she would have normally if she were using her own eyes. Let us add the assumption that the doctor is conscientious about feeding Helen correct information and that she has every reason to trust him. Helen *seems* to be seeing things, and her

visual experiences are caused by the things which she seems to see. But she doesn't really see them; the doctor is seeing for her. This is because her visual experiences are based on his in the way I described. It is only because differences in scenes make for differences in the doctor's beliefs that they make for differences in her visual experiences.

Contrast a patient who receives a double eye transplant or a patient who is fitted with artificial prosthetic eyes. This patient *does* see. He is not relying in the relevant manner on anyone's beliefs about the things he sees, although his visual experiences do depend on the work of the surgeon and on the donor of the transplanted eyes or the manufacturer of the prosthetic ones. In real life, cataract patients owe their visual experiences to others. All of our visual experiences depend on acts of omission by those who have refrained from altering or destroying our visual organs. Obviously these facts do not blind us.

6

The intuitions I have been appealing to are of a piece with those underlying H. P. Grice's distinction between *natural* and *nonnatural* meaning.²⁵ Spots mean_N (mean naturally) measles, he says, and the ringing of the bell of a bus means_{NN} (means nonnaturally) that the bus is full. Grice would say, no doubt, that if the explorer did indeed capture an actual dinosaur on film, his photographs mean_N that there is a dinosaur. One characteristic of natural meaning is this: the fact that something means_N that *p* entails *p*.²⁶ Black clouds mean (mean_N) rain only if they are in fact followed by rain. If the rain doesn't come, that isn't what the clouds meant. This gives us a sense in which photographs are necessarily perfectly accurate. If there was no dinosaur, then the photograph does not mean_N that there was one, no matter what it looks like. One who knew enough about the camera used in making a photograph, how the film was processed, and other relevant circumstances could infer with perfect accuracy about the objects photographed. This alone does not distinguish photographs from other pictures. Presumably, if I know enough about an artist—about his beliefs, desires, attitudes, capacities, and such, or his physiological makeup—I could infer

accurately, from his drawings, about what was in front of him when he drew (see "PVR," pp. 159–62). But Grice's distinction brings out a difference between the two cases. A *sketch* of a dinosaur does not *mean_N* that there was a dinosaur, even if there was one. The sketch is not necessarily accurate in this way.

The essential accuracy of photographs obviously does not prevent them from being misleading. It affects instead how we describe our mistakes and how we think of them. Consider a photographic portrait of Twiggy, made with the help of a bowed mirror, which appears to show her with a huge paunch. If viewers are misled, it is not because of a divergence between what the picture means_N and reality. Their mistake is about what the picture means_N. It means_N not that Twiggy is fat but that she is skinny, as one who knew about the mirror could ascertain.

To think of photographs as necessarily accurate is to think of them as especially close to the facts. It is not to think of them as intermediaries between us and the facts, as things that have their own meanings which may or may not correspond to the facts and which we have to decide whether or not to trust. To interpret a photograph properly *is* to get the facts.

Snyder and Allen claim that the way in which a photograph is made "has little to do with the way we normally interpret it" ("PVR," p. 159). Presumably, they would say that we interpret the photograph of Twiggy as "meaning" that she is fat, regardless of the fact that it was made with a distorting mirror. There is some truth in this. We may *take* the photograph to mean_N that Twiggy is fat; it may *look* to us as though it means_N that; Twiggy may appear to us to be fat when we see her through the photograph. Perhaps, also, the photograph makes it *fictional* that she is fat, and it might even mean_{NN} that she is. None of these facts force us to deny that the picture means_N not that Twiggy is fat but that she is skinny. Photographs, as bearers of *natural* meaning, are necessarily accurate. And our realization that they are—even when we are unsure of or mistaken about *what* they mean_N—profoundly affects our experience of them.

The fact that something means_{NN} *p* does not entail *p*. It is connected instead with the notion of *someone's* meaning *p* by it. Nonnatural symbols are thought of as intermediaries which stand

between us and the facts. We ascertain what the symbols mean, from which we learn what was meant by them (which needn't be the same as what the symbols mean), and we must judge whether what is meant by them is true. Our access to things via nonnatural symbols is thought of as less direct than our access via natural ones.

Drawings and paintings are sometimes non-natural symbols—but not always. Pieter Brueghel probably did not intend viewers of *Children's Games* to learn what games were played in the sixteenth century by recognizing his intention that they do so. Still, the meaning of the picture is enough like nonnatural meaning for us to see its difference from photographs. The beliefs about children's games in the sixteenth century which the painting induces are based on the *beliefs* of the painter, if not on his communicative intentions.

7

The distinction between transparent and opaque pictures will provoke a variety of intriguing examples. Some of them show that this distinction does not coincide neatly with our usual differentiation between photographs and nonphotographic pictures. Some suggest that there are *degrees* of transparency, while others suggest that a picture can be transparent in certain *respects* and opaque in other respects. In some instances the question of whether a picture is transparent probably has no determinate answer.

There are pictures which are drawn or painted by people but in a mechanical manner of one sort or another. One may attach a piece of transparent paper to a window and trace the outlines of the objects seen through it. One may copy a photograph, conceivably without even recognizing what it is a photograph of, or paint over a photograph, matching the brightness of each spot of the original.²⁷ One might use a directional light meter and fill in the squares of a grid with shades of gray corresponding to the readings it gives of the various parts of a scene, or one might dispense with the light meter and estimate the brightnesses by eye. There are also doodles done automatically, while the doodler's mind is on other things.²⁸ Some such mechanically executed drawings are probably transparent.²⁹

Are any photographs opaque? What about ones which are devised largely in the darkroom—by combining negatives, retouching, burning out unwanted images, manipulating exposure and contrast, using filters, and so on [. . .]? Some have maintained that such photographic constructions are essentially similar to paintings.³⁰ The darkroom artist exercises as much control over the finished product as painters do; his work seems no more mechanical or less human, although his tools and materials are different. The paradigms of transparent pictures would seem to be not the work of professional photographers but casual snapshots and home movies made by doting parents and wide-eyed tourists with assists from Kodak.

Photographic constructions do differ importantly from snapshots, but to lump them with paintings would be a big mistake. There is the extreme case of a “photograph” made by exposing photographic paper, dot by dot, with a flashlight, to make a pointillist-style rendition of Lincoln, for example. *This* is drawing with a flashlight; one doesn’t see Lincoln through the picture. But consider more common darkroom techniques such as combining negatives and manipulating contrast. We see a person through a photograph of him no matter how lightly or darkly it is printed—even if it “falsifies” the brightness of the person or the brightness relations of his parts—although we may not see the *state of affairs* of his being illuminated in a certain way. If a photograph apparently showing Deng Xiaoping conversing with Yasir Arafat was made by combining negatives of each, the viewer does not see the event of their conversing, even if they were conversing when the two photographs were taken. But he *does* see Deng, and he *does* see Arafat. Most photographic constructions are transparent in some of their parts or in certain respects. If a viewer doesn’t know how a photograph was made, he won’t know what he is seeing through it and what he isn’t. But he will probably realize that he is seeing *some* of the things or events or states of affairs which the picture portrays, even if he does not know which ones, and this realization significantly colors his experience. His experience is not unlike that of seeing a white shape and wondering whether one is seeing a ghost.

[. . .]

It may *seem* to the viewer, moreover, that he is seeing everything that the photograph portrays even if he is not and even if he knows that he is not. Many photographic constructions appear to be transparent even in respects in which they are not, and this gives them a sort of realism which obviously nonphotographic pictures lack.

The viewer of Jerry Uelsmann’s *Symbolic Mutation* [. . .] hardly has the impression of seeing a hand fused with a face, however; it is too obvious that the picture was made from two negatives. In other cases sophisticated viewers may judge simply from the slickness of a photograph that it is likely to have been manipulated in one way or another in the darkroom, even if they don’t spot the seams. As a result, their impression of seeing through the picture may be weakened. This is one reason why some filmmakers have deliberately tried to mimic the crudity of home movies, using hand-held cameras, purposefully bad focus, and so on (for example, John Cassavetes’ *Shadows* [1960]). These techniques sacrifice any possibility of producing the illusion that the viewers are *face-to-face* with the characters—which is hardly a live possibility anyway—in favor of a more convincing illusion of seeing the characters *through the photographs*. This reconciles the immediacy which is claimed for such techniques—the feeling they provide of intimacy with the objects portrayed—with the obvious sense of contrivance that they engender—their calling attention to the medium. Emphasizing the medium is usually regarded as a way of distancing appreciators from the world portrayed. In this case it has just the opposite effect.

8

A certain conception of the nature of perception is beginning to emerge: to perceive things is to be in *contact* with them in a certain way. A mechanical connection with something, like that of photography, counts as contact, whereas a humanly mediated one, like that of painting, does not. Perceptual contact with things has rather less to do with acquiring knowledge about them than has sometimes been supposed.

We may be approaching a *necessary* condition for seeing through pictures and for perception in general, but we are far from having a sufficient

condition. Imagine a machine that is sensitive to the light which emanates from a scene and that produces not pictures but accurate verbal descriptions of the scene. The machine's printouts are surely not transparent; in looking at them, one does not *see* the scene which the machine translated into words. Yet the printouts are made just as mechanically as any photographs are.

It is easy to say that the reason why we don't see through such mechanically generated descriptions is that we don't *see* them as the scene they describe; perhaps we are incapable of seeing them this way. If one fails to see a photograph as Dwight Eisenhower, or as a person, or as anything but a collection of blotches on a flat surface, we might deny that one sees Eisenhower through the photograph. One doesn't see Eisenhower, perhaps, unless one *notices* him, in some appropriate sense (although it isn't necessary to recognize him as Eisenhower or even as a person). But this doesn't help without an account of *seeing-as* and an explanation of why our not seeing the descriptions as the scene should make a difference. Nor will it help to declare that only *pictures*, not representations of other kinds, can be transparent. We need to know why the machine's printouts don't qualify as pictures and why nonpictures can't be transparent.

Investigating things by examining pictures of them (either photographs or drawings) is strikingly analogous to investigating them by looking at them directly and disanalogous to investigating them by examining descriptions of them. One such analogy concerns what is easy and what is difficult to ascertain and what mistakes the investigator is susceptible to. The numerals "3" and "8" are sometimes easily mistaken for each other. So when reading about a tree which is actually 85 feet high, one might easily take it to be 35 feet high. This mistake is much more likely than that of thinking it is 85.00001 rather than 85 feet high. The reverse is true when we look at the tree directly or examine a picture of it. A *house* is easily confused with a *horse* or a *hearse*, when our information comes from a verbal description, as is a *cat* with a *cot*, a *madam* with a *madman*, *intellectuality* with *ineffectuality*, and so on. When we confront things directly or via pictures, houses are more apt to be confused with barns or woodsheds, cats with puppies, and so forth.

It would be much too hasty to conclude that it is simply differences of this sort which disqualify investigating a scene through mechanically generated descriptions as seeing it. Different mistakes are likely when we see under conditions of dim illumination from those that are likely with bright illumination. (Colors are especially hard to ascertain in dim light; outlines may be easier to distinguish then than in bright light.) If there were such a thing as "seeing-through-descriptions," we should expect that the mistakes one is susceptible to when seeing in that manner would differ from those one is susceptible to when seeing in other ways. There is a deeper point to be made—one about perception in general, not just vision.

There are important correspondences between the way we perceive (whether directly or with photographic assistance) and the way the world really is (or the way we think of it as being, but I will postpone this caveat temporarily). I do not mean that the results of perception conform to facts about the world, that things have the properties we perceive them to have. Nor do I mean that our percepts or sense-data resemble what they are percepts or sense-data of. Rather, the structure of the enterprise of perceiving bears important analogies to the structure of reality. In *this* sense we perceive the world as it is.

The mistakes a perceiver is susceptible to correspond to similarities among things themselves. Things which are easily confusable perceptually, difficult to discriminate, are things which really are similar to each other in some respect, more similar than things which are less easily confusable. An 85-foot tree resembles one which is 85.00001 feet high more closely than it does a 35-foot tree. Houses are more like barns and woodsheds than horses or hearses. Things with different shades of red are more like each other (in color) than they are like green things. In fact, the degree of similarity explains the likelihood of confusion. It is because of the similarity between 85- and 85.00001-foot trees that they are difficult to distinguish. The correspondence between similarity and perceptual confusability is intrinsic, I suggest, to the notion of perception. A process of discrimination counts as perceptual only if its structure is thus analogous to the structure of the world. When we perceive, we are, in this way, intimate with what is perceived. This goes a long way

toward explaining our feeling of closeness to things which we see through photographs.

We are not similarly intimate with the world when we investigate it through descriptions, even mechanically generated ones. Descriptions scramble the real similarity relations. Houses are not much like horses or hearses. The difficulty of distinguishing a house from a hearse when we are reading about it is due not to the nature of the house and hearses but to facts about the words used to describe them. So we think of the words as getting between us and what we are reading about, as blocking our view of it, in a way that photographs and sense-data do not block our view of what they are photographs or sense-data of. The structure of discrimination by means of mechanically generated descriptions does not correspond to the structure of the world and, so, does not qualify as perception.

Are things easily confusable in perception *really* similar in some respect? Scientific investigation may suggest otherwise. Perceived colors don't correlate precisely with wavelengths of reflected light. Environments which feel similarly or even indistinguishably cold may differ considerably in temperature, with compensating differences in humidity and wind. One might take this to mean that the correlation between how things affect us perceptually and how things are in themselves is less than perfect. Or one might recognize properties—visible colors and perceived cold—which are distinct from wavelengths of reflected light and temperature and with respect to which the correlations do hold. In any case, we *think of* easily confusable objects as being similar, despite our awareness of the scientific facts. And perhaps it is this that is intrinsic to perception. If scientific research should uncover massive breakdowns in the presumed correlations and if, after reflecting on these results, we no longer even thought of easily confusable things as being similar, I doubt that we would or should continue to speak of *perceiving* them.

Some question the very notion of real similarity. Resemblance is only a matter of how we think of things, it is argued; similarity is relative to one's "conceptual scheme." In that case it will have to be what we think of as similarities—what similarities there are relative to one's conceptual scheme—which corresponds to difficulty of perceptual discrimination. But this will suffice. We don't

think of houses as being especially similar to horses or hearses; so discrimination by means of mechanically generated descriptions is not perceptual.

Why do we regard the things we do as being similar? Sometimes, I suggest, precisely because they are easily confused (when examined in ways which otherwise count as perceptual). It is because visually discriminating among paint chips of various shades of pink is relatively difficult that we think of them as resembling each other. So facts about our discriminative capacities might be said to create similarities—similarities relative to our conceptual scheme, which on the present suggestion is the only kind that there is—thereby establishing the relevant correlations.³¹

It now looks as though mechanically generated descriptions could, in the right circumstances, be transparent. Suppose that we used description-generating devices regularly to investigate the world. Perhaps this would affect what we think of as similarities, thereby changing our conceptual scheme. We might recognize such properties as *apparent-via-description-generating-devices houseness* and *apparent-via-description-generating-devices hearseness* and regard these properties as analogous to visible colors, as characteristics of things themselves in virtue of which they can be alike, not just as capacities to affect us through the devices. In that case difficulty of discrimination by means of description-generating devices would be correlated with what we think of as similarities. So we might well think of ourselves as seeing through the descriptions, and—especially if there is nothing to "real" similarity among things except being thought of as similar—we might really be seeing through them. Perhaps the mechanically generated descriptions would then be transparent.

We are quickly becoming entangled in some of the deepest problems philosophy has to offer. Nevertheless, it should be clear from our recent speculations that there are fundamental differences between pictures and descriptions of a kind which plausibly allow mechanically generated pictures—photographs—to be transparent even though, apart from unusual circumstances like those just imagined, mechanically generated descriptions would not be. This challenge to the transparency of photographs is defused.

We have learned that perceptual contact with the world is to be distinguished from two different sorts of nonperceptual access to it: access mediated by intervening descriptions as well as access via another person. The common contrast between seeing something and being told about it conflates the two. When someone describes a scene to us, we are doubly removed from it; contact is broken both by the intervention of the person, the teller, and by the verbal form of the telling. Perceptual contact can itself be mediated—by mirrors or television circuits or photographs. But *this* mediation is a means of *maintaining* contact. Viewers of photographs are in perceptual contact with the world.

9

What is photographic realism? Transparency is not the whole story. Realism is a concept with many faces, and photography wears more than one of them. We must not forget how adept photography is at portraying subtleties of texture, shadow, and reflection; how effortlessly it captures the jumbled trivia of ordinary life; how skillfully it uses perspective. The capacity of photography as it is now practiced to “reveal reality” is especially important. Photographic evidence is often very reliable—hence its usefulness in court proceedings and extortion plots. This is no automatic consequence of the “mechanicalness” of the photographic process, however. It derives rather from the fact that our photographic equipment and procedures happen to be standardized in certain respects. (They are not standardized in all respects, of course; so we have to be selective about what conclusions we draw from photographs. We can usually say little beyond gross approximations about the absolute illumination of a scene, for example, on the basis of a photograph, since shutter speeds, film speeds, and lens apertures are so variable.)

But photography’s various other talents must not be confused with or allowed to obscure its remarkable ability to put us in perceptual contact with the world, an ability which can be claimed even by a fuzzy and badly exposed snapshot depicting few details and offering little information. It is this—photography’s transparency—which is most distinctively photographic and

which constitutes the most important justification for speaking of “photographic realism.”

Acknowledgments

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Notes

- 1 Perhaps the best recent defense of this dissenting view is that of Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen, “Photography, Vision, and Representation,” *Critical Inquiry* 2 (Autumn 1975): 143–69; all further references to this work, abbreviated “PVR,” will be included in the text.
- 2 See André Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray, vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 12; all further references to this work, abbreviated “OPI,” will be included in the text. See also Rudolf Arnheim, “Melancholy Unshaped,” *Toward a Psychology of Art: Collected Essays* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 186.
- 3 Here is more from Bazin:

Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer. The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. [“OPI,” p. 14]

The photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being, after the fashion of a fingerprint. Wherefore, photography actually contributes something to the order of natural creation instead of providing a substitute for it. [“OPI,” p. 15]

And see Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (New York, 1974): “The cinema is the ‘phenomenological’ art *par excellence*, the signifier is coextensive with the whole of the signified, the spectacle its own signification, thus short-circuiting the sign itself” (p. 43).

The claim that the photographic image is identical with the object photographed has resonances in Helmut Gernsheim's observation that "the camera intercepts images, the paintbrush reconstructs them" (quoted by Charles Barr, "Cinemascope: Before and After," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, 2d ed. [New York, 1979], p. 144); in Erwin Panofsky's dictum "The medium of the movies is physical reality as such" ("Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, p. 263); and in the frequent characterization of photographs as "duplicates" or "doubles" or "reproductions" or "substitutes" or "surrogates" (see, e.g., Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 7 [Spring 1981]: 577–603).

- 4 Stanley Cavell prefers not to take Bazin and Panofsky literally. The truth in what they say, he suggests, is that "a photograph is of the world" ("of reality or nature"), whereas "[a] painting is a world." In explanation, he observes that one "can always ask, of an area photographed, what lies adjacent to that area, beyond the frame. This generally makes no sense asked of a painting" (*The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged ed. [Cambridge, Mass., 1979], pp. 24, 16, 24, 23). But photographs typically have their own (fictional) worlds, as do paintings. And since paintings frequently portray actual scenes, they, like photographs, are often of the real world. We can ask, concerning a painting of an actual scene as well as a photograph, what there is in reality outside the portion depicted. Indeed we can also ask, in both cases, what the fictional world is like beyond the frame. Smoke within a frame may indicate (fictional) fire outside it.
- 5 See Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," pp. 248 and 260.
- 6 E. H. Gombrich, "Meditations on a Hobby Horse or the Roots of Artistic Form," *Meditations on a Hobby Horse, and Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (London, 1963), p. 2.
- 7 Arnheim, "The Robin and the Saint," *Toward a Psychology of Art*, p. 325.
- 8 See Scruton, "Photography and Representation," p. 579.
- 9 But Bazin was fuzzy about what direction this is. The screen, he says, puts us

"in the presence of" the actor. It does so in the same way as a mirror—one must agree that the mirror relays the presence of the person reflected in it—but it is a mirror with a delayed reflection, the tin foil of which retains the

image. ... In the film about Manolete ... we are present at the actual death of the famous matador. ["Theater and Cinema—Part Two," *What Is Cinema?*, pp. 97–98]

Obviously, spectators of a film of a matador are not in the presence of the matador, nor does it seem to them that they are. Indeed Bazin himself apparently agrees, as he continues:

While our emotion may not be as deep as if we were actually present in the arena at that historic moment, its nature is the same. What we lose by way of direct witness do we not recapture thanks to the artificial proximity provided by photographic enlargement? [Ibid., p. 98; my emphasis]

Cavell also suggests comparing photographs with mirrors (see *The World Viewed*, p. 213). E. M. Zemach discusses aids to vision more generally (see "Seeing, 'Seeing,' and Feeling," *Review of Metaphysics* 23 [Sept. 1969]: 3–24).

- 10 Siegfried Kracauer's talk of photography's revealing reality could be taken as making this point (see *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* [Fair Lawn, N.J., 1960], p. 28). And so could Arnheim's claim that "by its very nature ... the motion picture tends to satisfy the desire for faithful reports about curious, characteristic, exciting things going on in this world of ours" (*Film as Art* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957], p. 34).
- 11 We speak naturally enough of seeing Johnny Carson on television, of seeing Charlie Chaplin in the movies, and of hearing people over the telephone and in recordings. We may also, naturally enough, deny that a person has seen Johnny Carson if he has "seen" him only on television, for example.
- 12 Some find the notion of seeing the past too much to swallow and dismiss talk of seeing long concluded events through telescopes as deviant or somehow to be explained away (see Alvin I. Goldman, "Perceptual Objects," *Synthese* 35 [July 1977]: 269, and David Lewis, "Veridical Hallucination and Prosthetic Vision," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 58 [Sept. 1980]: 241–42). If seeing the past is allowed, one might worry that having a memory image of something will qualify as seeing it. Zemach accepts this consequence (see "Seeing, 'Seeing,' and Feeling," pp. 15–16). But it probably can be avoided, at least for most memory images. Many, if not all, memory images are based on one's own earlier beliefs about the object, in a manner relevantly similar to the way in which the

- visual experiences of the viewers of a painting are based on the painter's beliefs about the object. So one does not see through the memory image for the same reason that one does not see through paintings. But, if we are to speak of "seeing-through-photographs," we may have to allow that when an image of something one saw previously, but did not notice, pops into one's head, one sees it again. I do not find this result distressing. For any who do, however, or for any who reject the possibility of seeing the past, there is another way out. Suppose we agree that what I call "seeing-through-photographs" is not a mode of *perception*. We can always find a different term. The sharp break between photography and other pictures remains. We still can say that one sees present occurrences via a television monitor but not through, for instance, a system of simultaneous sketching. *This* is a significant difference. And one's access to past events via photographs of them differs in the same way from one's access to them via paintings.
- 13 The slippery slope may make it hard to avoid sliding farther in another direction than some would like. When we look at fossils or footprints, do we see or perceive ancient marine organisms or ancient animals' feet? I repeat that my point needn't be made in terms of vision or perception. One might prefer to introduce a new notion, to speak of being "in contact with" things, for instance, when one either sees them with the naked eye or sees mirror images or photographs or fossils or footprints of them—but not when one sees drawings of them (see Patrick Maynard, "The Secular Icon: Photography and the Functions of Images," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 [Winter 1983]: 155–69). It may not be desirable for our theory to recognize, in addition, a more restricted notion of perceiving or seeing, one which better fits the cases in which we use these everyday expressions; there simply may be no such natural kind. We should be prepared for the possibility that there is no very important distinction which even approximates the difference between perceiving things, in any everyday sense, and not perceiving them—that what we need is a radical reorganization of our concepts in this area.
- 14 The reader can get a better idea of what I mean by "fictionality" from my "Fearing Fictions," *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (Jan. 1978): 5–27.
- 15 Here is an analogous example: suppose a proud parent hears what he takes to be a recording of Johnny playing the piano and then learns that it is actually someone else mimicking Johnny's piano playing. He thought he was hearing Johnny play, via the recording, but he wasn't. Initially he swells with pride in little Johnny, then is deflated.
- 16 This example is a relative of Lewis' case of the loose wire (see Lewis, "Veridical Hallucination and Prosthetic Vision," p. 244).
- 17 See Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (18 Nov. 1976): 771–91.
- 18 William Henry Fox Talbot, inventor of the calotype, claimed for the Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire the distinction of being the first building "that was ever yet known to have drawn its own picture" (*The Pencil of Nature* [London, 1844–46], n. to pl. 15). Bazin credits photography with "completely satisfying our appetite for illusion by a mechanical reproduction in the making of which man plays no part. ... For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man" ("OPI," pp. 12, 13). "The fundamental peculiarity of the photographic medium," says Arnheim, is the fact that "the physical objects themselves print their image by means of the optical and chemical action of light" ("On the Nature of Photography," *Critical Inquiry* 1 [Sept. 1974]: 155).
- 19 See H. Gene Blocker, "Pictures and Photographs," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36 (Winter 1977):
- Photographs most certainly do *not* escape subjectivity. ...
- Through the selection of subject, angle, amount, and direction of light, background, sharpness of focus, and light-dark contrast—in all these ways the photographer represents the object from a subjective point of view, expressive of feeling and mood. [P. 158]
- 20 See *ibid.*, p. 161, and "PVR," pp. 156 and 164–65.
- 21 See Fred I. Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing* (Chicago, 1969), chap. 2.
- 22 In some cases the important conditional counterfactual dependence which distinguishes opaque pictures from transparent ones may be not so much on the picture maker's *beliefs* as on his visual experience, or his thoughts, or possibly his intentions.
- 23 In special cases photographs may be causally but not counterfactually dependent on the scene. Then there may be no hope of learning about the scene from the photograph: the photograph would have been as it is even if the scene had been different. But one still *sees* the scene through the photograph. Perception is to be understood in terms of causation rather than counterfactuals, if the former doesn't reduce to the latter (see William K. Goossens, "Causal Chains and Counterfactuals," *Journal of Philosophy* 76 [Sept. 1979]: 489–95).

- 24 These examples are adapted from Lewis, "Veridical Hallucination and Prosthetic Vision," pp. 243–44. But Lewis does not see a sharp difference between the two cases.
- 25 H. P. Grice, "Meaning," *Philosophical Review* 66 (July 1957): 377–88.
- 26 See *ibid.*, p. 377.
- 27 It was not uncommon in the mid-nineteenth century to paint portraits over photographs (see Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* [Harmondsworth, 1968], p. 44).
- 28 I owe the last two examples, respectively, to Robert Howell and to George Wilson.
- 29 It is time to confess that the Chuck Close example is not as clear-cut as I implied. Close made many of his works by projecting a photograph on the canvas and painting over it. If this is how his *Self-Portrait* was executed, its opacity may be questionable. My point, of course, is unaffected. If *Self-Portrait* had been painted in the usual manner, it would definitely be opaque, and the viewer who comes to believe that it was so painted after having assumed it to be a photograph experiences the jolt I described.
- 30 Scruton remarks that if a photographer proceeds "to paint things out or in, to touch up, alter, or *pass-ticher* as he pleases, ... he has now become a painter" ("Photography and Representation," pp. 593–94).
- 31 This seems to turn on its head our earlier suggestion that it is similarities among things that make them difficult to discriminate perceptually. But we can have it both ways. What count as similarities for us, what respects of resemblance there are relative to our conceptual scheme, is determined (partly, anyway) by which discriminations are easy to make and which are difficult, given our usual modes of (what otherwise count as) perception. The fact that certain things are similar in these respects explains the difficulty of discriminating them.

The Power of Movies

Noël Carroll

FOR MUCH OF ITS HISTORY, film theory has been obsessed with various notions of realism. In what has come to be called classical film theory, i.e., film theory until 1965, the writings of André Bazin evince the extreme form of this obsession. Bazin held that the film image was an objective re-presentation of the past, a veritable slice of reality.¹ In addition to this view of the ontology of film, Bazin also advanced the psychological corollary that spectators somehow regard the images on screen as identical with their referents. Contemporary film theorists reject Bazin's metaphysics concerning the nature of the film image; influenced by semiotics, such theorists deny there is any literal sense to be made of the idea that film is some kind of natural mirror onto reality. Yet contemporary film theorists do hold onto a portion of the realist approach, notably its psychological presuppositions. That is, contemporary theorists, while rejecting the notion that film is a slice of reality, nevertheless agree that in its standard uses, film imparts a *realistic effect* to its viewers. This effect, a psychological effect, is described by various formulas, including the notions that film gives the impression of reality

narrating itself; film causes an illusion of reality; or film appears natural.²

Surely, contemporary theorists are correct in forsaking the extravagances of Bazin's ontology of film, the great influence of his theory notwithstanding. However, contemporary film theory's psychologizing of the realist approach, in terms of realist effects, is not very persuasive. For it requires attributing rather bizarre and frankly dubious mental states to spectators. Spectators are said to be under the illusion that the film image is its referent; or we are thought to believe that the film image is reality narrating itself; or that the film image is somehow natural. Some of these imputed psychological effects—for example, “reality narrating itself”—sound downright incoherent. But all of these variations on the realistic effect are suspect because they attribute to spectators states of belief that would preclude our characteristic forms of response to, and appreciation of, cinema. For, were we spectators ever to mistake the representations before us for the referents those images portray, we could not sit by comfortably, inactively, and appreciatively while buffaloes stampede toward us, while lovers reveal their deepest longings to each other, and while children are tortured.³

The realist approach to film theory, either as an ontological thesis or in its more contemporary, psychologized variations, is a dead end. However, the questions that motivated the realist answers

Noël Carroll, “The Power of Movies” in *Daedalus* 114(4), 1985, pp. 79–103. Reproduced with permission of MIT Press.

may well be worth asking. That is, what is it that the various realist approaches in film theory are designed to explain, and is it worth explaining? At least two candidates seem key here. Realism, especially as a psychological effect, is supposed to play a role in explaining the way in which film disseminates ideology, according to contemporary film theorists. Second, the attribution of realism is meant to explain the power of movies, to explain why the moving picture, including narrative TV, is the dominant art form of the twentieth century.

Certainly, "How does cinema promote ideology?" and "What makes movies powerful?" are good questions. The purpose of this paper is to attempt to answer the second question, without resorting to the invocation of realism.⁴ We shall try to explain what makes motion pictures our dominant mass art, one that is so widespread, internationally pervasive, and accessible across boundaries of class and culture. We shall furthermore attempt to explain what makes the response to movies *so intense for so many*, especially when compared to art forms such as opera and theater.

The hypothesis of realism was meant to deal with such questions by suggesting that since films appear to be slices of reality, they are widely accessible insofar as everyone is familiar with reality. But the reference to reality here won't give us much help with the intensity of our response to movies, because in large measure we conceive of the special intensity of movies exactly in contrast to our more diffuse responses to quotidian reality. Another way to put this, of course, is to point out that since our response to reality is so often lackluster, claiming that a film appears to be a slice of reality promises no explanation of our extraordinarily intense response to films. So another explanation, one not reliant upon realism, must be found to account for the power of movies.

To begin an account of the power of movies, some characterization of the phenomenon in question is relevant. First, the word "movies," as used here, does not refer to film or cinema at large—that is, to a body of cultural productions that includes, not only commercial, narrative films, but also industrial documentaries, medical training films, ballistics tests, experimental films, modernist art films, propaganda films, and so on. Rather, "movies" refers to popular mass-media films, the products of what might be called

Hollywood International—films made in what has been dubbed the "classical style," whether they be American, Italian, or Chinese, and whether they be made for the screen or for TV. Movies, in this sense, are a genre, not the whole, of cinema. It is about this genre's power that my paper is concerned. Why speak of the power of a genre of cinema rather than of the power of the medium? Well, the answer to that is simply that the medium of cinema is not, in and of itself, powerful; it is not the medium of cinema that has gripped such widespread audiences so intensely. Instead, it is the adaptation of the medium to the purposes of Hollywood International. When people speak of the power of the medium, they are, I believe, talking about the power of this particular genre or style. For it is the movies, and not modernist masterpieces or medical instruction films, that have captivated the twentieth-century popular imagination. It is the power of movies about which researchers are really curious.

To speak of movies rather than film or cinema deliberately eschews essentialism. Posing the problem in an essentialist idiom—i.e., what makes the *medium* of cinema powerful—would pervert the question. For neither the medium nor every style of film found in it is accessible to or intensely engaging of mass, popular audiences. Thus, plumbing the essence of the medium, if there is such a thing, would not provide the information we seek. Instead of comparing the medium of film to other media such as theater or literature, then, this paper will focus on the *genre of movies* in order to determine just what features of the stylistic choices of Hollywood International enable it to evoke a level of widespread, intensive engagement that is, ex hypothesis, unrivaled by other media. Indeed, this way of stating the project is not quite accurate; for it is not the case that the genre of movies is really to be contrasted with other media, but rather that movies will be contrasted with other *genres* within other media. We want to know what features of movies like *Red River*, *Psycho*, and *Blue Thunder* make them more appealing and more intensely engaging for mass audiences than, for example, plays like *King Lear* and *Hurlyburly*, ballets like *Giselle*, and novels like *Middlemarch*. My anti-essentialism amounts to a refusal to answer questions about the power of movies in terms of the specificity of the medium of cinema. It may seem that proclaiming this

variety of anti-essentialism at this late date is so much redundant arm-waving. But I'm not sure. The influence of Christian Metz's recent essay, "The Imaginary Signifier," which proceeds methodologically in an essentialist manner, trying to isolate and analyze a cinema-specific feature of the medium which he identifies as a special sort of play of presence and absence, testifies to the persistent appeal of the essentialist approach.⁵

The power of movies comprises two factors: widespread engagement and intense engagement. This paper will attempt to explain the former in terms of those features of movies that make them highly accessible to broad audiences. It will also try to explain the intensity of movies by examining those features that enable movies to depict a very high degree of clarity. In a nutshell, its thesis is that the power of movies resides in their easily graspable clarity for mass audiences.

We can begin to understand the general popularity of the movie genre by considering those features that make it generally accessible to mass, untutored audiences. A good place to start this investigation is with the image projected by the single-shot—a close-up of the hero's face, or a long-view of Castle Dracula. These images are, for the most part, representational, but, more important, they are *pictorial* representations. They refer to their referents by way of *picturing*, by displaying or manifesting a delimited range of resemblances to their referents. By recognizing these similarities, the spectator comes to know what the picture depicts, whether a man, a horse, a house, and so on.

Given that the typical movie image is a pictorial representation, what has this to do with accessibility? Well, a picture is a very special sort of symbol. Psychological evidence strongly supports the contention that we learn to recognize what a picture stands for as soon as we have become able to recognize the objects, or kinds of objects, that serve as the models for that picture. Picture recognition is not a skill acquired over and above object recognition. Whatever features or cues we come to employ in object recognition, we also mobilize to recognize what pictures depict. A child raised without pictorial representations will, after being shown a couple of pictures, be able to identify the referent of any picture of an object with which he or she is familiar.⁶ The rapid development of this picture-recognition

capacity contrasts strongly with the acquisition of a symbol system such as language. Upon mastering a couple of words, the child is nowhere near mastering the entire language. Similarly, when an adult is exposed to one or two representational *pictures* in an alien pictorial idiom, say a Westerner confronting a Japanese image in the floating-point-of-view style, he will be able to identify the referent of any picture in that format after studying one or two representations of that sort for a few moments. But no Westerner, upon learning one or two linguistic symbols of the Japanese language, could go on to identify the reference of all, or even merely a few more, Japanese words. Moreover, historically the Japanese were eminently able to catch on to and replicate the Western system of perspectival picturing by examining a selection of book illustrations; but they could never have acquired any European language by learning the meanings of just a few words or phrases.⁷

Pictorial representations thus differ radically from linguistic representations. The speed with which the former is mastered suggests that it does not require special learning, above the realization, perhaps, that flat surfaces are being used to stand for three-dimensional objects. Rather, the capacity to recognize what a picture depicts emerges in tandem with the capacity to recognize the kind of object that serves as the model of the picture. The reciprocal relation between picture recognition and object recognition, of course, explains how it is possible for us, having acquired detailed visual information from pictures, to recognize objects and places we have never encountered in real life. And, of course, the fact that pictorial recognition does not require any special learning process would also explain how movies, whose basic constituent symbols are pictures, are immediately accessible to *untutored* audiences in every corner of the world. These audiences do not need any special training to deal with the basic images in movies, for the capacity to recognize what these images are about has evolved part and parcel with the viewer's capacity to recognize objects and events.

The technology of film could be adapted in such a way that the basic images of a film genre or film style were not pictorial representations. One could imagine a motion picture industry of changing abstract forms, after the fashion of Hans

Richter's *Rhythmus 21*, or one of spectacles of color, such as Stan Brakhage's *Text of Light*. But that was not the road taken by the movies. Movies became a worldwide phenomenon—and a lucrative industry—precisely because in their exploitation of pictorial recognition—as opposed to symbol systems that require mastery of processes such as reading, decoding, or deciphering in order to be understood—they rely on a biological capability that is nurtured in humans as they learn to identify the objects and events in their environment.

The basic images in movies are not simply pictorial representations; they are, standardly, *moving* pictorial representations. But just as an audience need not go through a process of learning to “read” pictures, neither is its perception of movie “movement” learned. Rather, it is a function of the way stroboscopic or beta phenomena affect the brain's organization of congruous input presented in specifiable sequences to different points on the retina. Of course, following a movie involves much more than the capacity to recognize what its moving images represent. But we should not overlook the crucial role that the relative ease of comprehending the basic symbols of movies plays in making movies readily accessible.

The remarks thus far are apt to displease the majority of cinema researchers. For the contention that pictures (and, by extension, moving pictures) work by looking like their referents in those pertinent respects to which our perceptual system is keyed, goes against the contemporary received wisdom that pictures, like any other symbol, are matters of codes and conventions. Undoubtedly, some reader will recall an anthropology class in which he was told that certain non-Western peoples were unable to understand pictures shown to them by missionaries and other field workers. However, this evidence has never been entirely decisive. Complaints about the fidelity of the photographs involved have been raised, along with the more serious objection that what the subjects failed to understand, and then only initially, was the practice of using flat surfaces to portray three-dimensional objects.⁸ Once they got the hang of that, they had no trouble in recognizing what hitherto unseen pictures referred to—assuming they were familiar with the kinds of objects displayed in the pictures.⁹

Also, on the non-conventionalist side of the scale, we must weigh the psychological evidence of the child's acquisition of pictorial recognition, the easy cross-cultural dissemination of pictorial practices, and the zoological evidence that certain animals have the capacity for pictorial recognition,¹⁰ against exotic anecdotes that are meant to demonstrate that the practices of picturing are cultural conventions that must be learned in the fashion of a language. We can consider our own cases. We all recall our own language acquisition, and we know how to go about helping youngsters to learn to speak and to read. But who remembers undergoing a similar process in regard to pictures, and what techniques would we employ to teach a youngster pictorial literacy? Yes, we may show a child a few pictures and say the name of the object portrayed. But very shortly the child just sees what the picture is of; the child doesn't “read” the picture or decode it or go through some process of inference. And from a meager set of samples, the child can proceed to identify the subjects of a plethora of pictures, because there is a continuum between apprehending pictorial representations and perceiving the world that does not depend upon learning anything like the conventional, arbitrary correlations of a vocabulary, or the combinatory principles of a grammar.

There is undoubtedly a temptation to think that picture recognition involves some process of decoding or inference because of the contemporary influence of the computational metaphor of the mind. We think that computers supply us with powerful insight into how the mind works. And if we were to build a computer to simulate pictorial recognition, it would require a complex information-processing system. But it does not follow that if computers employ complex information-processing systems in pictorial recognition, then humans must likewise possess such systems. It may rather be that our neurophysiology is so constructed that when stimulated by certain pictorial arrays, we see what the picture is of. John Searle notes that balance is controlled by the fluids in our inner ear. Were a robot to be built, balance would probably be governed by some complex computational program. But, for us, balance is a matter governed by our fleshy hardware.¹¹ A similar case might be made that biology—rather than information processing—may

have a great deal to tell us about the workings of object recognition and picture recognition. And to the extent that pictorial representation is a matter of the way in which humans are made, a practice rooted in pictorial representation—such as the movies—will be widely and easily accessible to all humans made that way.

Many contemporary semiotically inclined film theorists resist approaching pictorial representation in the movies in the preceding fashion. Their resistance rests on a confusion, or rather a conflation, on their part of the ideas of code, convention, and culture; terms that in film studies are treated as equivalent. If something is coded or conventional, then it is regarded as a cultural production. This seems fair enough. But it is more problematic to presume, as film researchers do, the opposite; that if something is a cultural product, then it is an example of coded or conventional phenomena. Thus, if pictorial representations, including moving, pictorial representations, are cultural productions, which they certainly are, then they must be conventional. The difficulty here lies in the assumption that everything that is cultural is necessarily conventional.

Consider plows. They are cultural productions. They were produced by certain agricultural civilizations that had culturally specific needs not shared, for example, by hunter-gatherers. Is the design of a plow a matter of convention? Recall, here, that for semiotic film theorists, arbitrariness is a key defining feature of a convention. That is, a group creates a convention—like driving on the right side of the road—when there are a number of alternative ways of dealing with the situation *and* when the choice between these alternatives is arbitrary, a matter of fiat. But the adoption of the design of the plow could not have been reached by fiat. The plow had a purpose—digging furrows—and its effectiveness had to be accommodated to the structure of nature. It would have to be heavy enough and sharp enough to cut into the earth, and it had to be adapted to the capacities of its human users—it had to be steerable and pullable by creatures like us with two arms and limited strength. A device such as a plow had to be discovered; it could not be brought into existence by consensus. We could not have elected pogo-sticks to do the work of plows. The plow was a cultural *invention*, not a cultural *convention*. It

was adopted because it worked, because it met a cultural need by accommodating features of nature and biology.

The point of introducing the concept of a *cultural invention* here is, of course, to block the facile identification of the cultural and the conventional. Applied to the sort of pictorial representations found in movies, this concept suggests that pictorial representations may be cultural inventions, inventions that, given the way people are built, cause spectators who are untrained in any system of conventions to recognize what pictures stand for. The structure of such images is not determinable by a mere decision. Given the constraints of the human perceptual apparatus, we cannot decree that anything *looks like* anything else, though we may decree that anything can *stand for* anything else. It seems cogent to suppose that this limitation is in large measure attributable to human biology. And insofar as movies are constituted of a mode of representation connected to biological features of the human organism, they will be generally more accessible than genres in other media, such as the novel, that presuppose the mastery of learned conventions such as specific natural languages. Also, if the recognition of movie images is more analogous to a reflex than it is to a process like reading, then following a movie may turn out to be less taxing, less a matter of active effort, than reading. Perhaps this can be confirmed by recalling how much easier it is to follow a movie when one is fatigued than it is to read a novel.

The claim has so far been made that a crucial element in the power of movies is the fact that movies usually rely, in terms of their basic imagery, on pictorial representations that allow masses of untutored spectators easy access to the fundamental symbols in the system, due to the way humans are constructed. But is this not just a reversion to the kind of realist explanation we began by dismissing? Not at all. The Bazinian claims that the spectator somehow takes the film image to be identical with its referent, while contemporary film theorists hold that the typical film image imparts the illusion of reality, transparency, or naturalness. This paper, though, has not invoked any of these realist, psychological effects, nor anything like them. It has instead claimed that the untutored spectator recognizes what the film image represents without reference to a code;

it has *not* claimed that the spectator takes the pictorial representation to be, in any sense, its referent. Man's perceptual capacities evolve in such a way that his capacity for pictorial recognition comes, almost naturally, with his capacity for object recognition, and part of that capacity is the ability to differentiate pictures from their referents. Thus, we are not talking about a realist, psychological effect—the taking of a representation for its referent—but only about the capacity of movies to exploit generic, recognitional abilities. Another way to see the difference between this approach and that of the realists is to note how often their accounts of the power of movies emphasize the importance of the fact that movies are photographic, whereas in the account offered here the important technology for explaining the accessibility of movies is the non-cinema-specific technology of pictorial representation.

If up to this point anything can be said to have been demonstrated, then, admittedly, it must also be conceded that we are a good distance away from a full account of the power of movies. We have explained why movies are more accessible than genres like novels. But what features of movies account for their presumably superior accessibility and intensity in comparison with media and genres like drama, ballet, and opera, in which recognition of what the representations refer to is, like movies, typically not mediated by learned processes of decoding, reading, or inference? What standard features of movies differentiate them from the standard features of the presentation of plays, for example, in a way that make typical movies more accessible than typical theatrical performances? Our hypothesis is that due to certain devices developed early in the evolution of movies, the typical movie is, all things being equal, easier to follow than the typical play, i.e., theatrical performances as have so far been commonly encountered. This caveat is added because there is no reason to believe that theatrical devices that would be functionally equivalent to the movie devices about to be discussed could not be invented, thus changing the relative accessibility of typical movies and typical plays. Our anti-essentialist bias, however, demands that we not compare the eternal essence of the film medium with its putative theatrical counterpart, but rather the state of the art of movies with the state of the art of theatrical production.

Movies are said to be more accessible than plays. What does this mean? We have asserted that movies are easier to follow than plays. What is it that is distinctive about the way in which spectators follow movies? With the typical movie, given certain of its characteristic devices, notably variable framing, the movie viewer is generally in a position where he or she is attending to exactly what is significant in the action-array or spectacle on screen. Another way of getting at this point is to say that the filmmaker in the movie genre has far more potential control over the spectator's attention than does the theatrical director. The consequence of this is that the movie spectator is always looking where he or she should be looking, always attending to the right details and thereby comprehending, nearly effortlessly, the ongoing action precisely in the way it is meant to be understood. Due to various devices, such as variable framing, movies are easier to follow and, therefore, more accessible than theatrical productions because movies are more perspicuous cognitively. The element of cognitive clarity afforded by movies may well account, too, for the widespread intensity of engagement that movies elicit.

Of course, movies and standard theatrical productions share many of the same devices for directing the audience's attention. Both in the medium-long shot and on the proscenium stage, the audience's attention can be guided by: the central positioning of an important character; movement in stasis; stasis in movement; characters' eyelines; light colors on dark fields; dark colors on light fields; sound, notably dialogue; spotlighting and variable illumination of the array; placement of important objects or characters along arresting diagonals; economy of set details; makeup and costume; commentary; gestures; and so on. But movies appear to have further devices and perhaps more effective devices for directing attention than does theater as it is presently practiced. The variability of focus in film, for example, is a more reliable means of making sure that the audience is looking where the spectator "ought" to be looking than is theatrical lighting. Even more important is the use in movies of variable framing. Through cutting and camera movement, the filmmaker can rest assured that the spectator is perceiving exactly what she should be perceiving at the precise moment she should be perceiving it. When the

camera comes in for a close-up, for example, there is no possibility that the spectator can be distracted by some detail stage-left. Everything extraneous to the story at that point is deleted. Nor does the spectator have to find the significant detail; it is delivered to her. The viewer also gets as close or as far-off a view of the significant objects of the story—be they heroines, butcher knives, mobs, fortresses, or planets—as is useful for her to have a concrete sense of what is going on. Whereas in a theater the eye constantly tracks the action—often at a felt distance, often amidst a vaulting space—in movies much of that work is done by shifting camera positions, which at the same time also assures that the average viewer has not gotten lost in the space but is looking precisely at that which she is supposed to see. Movies are therefore easier to follow than typical stage productions, because the shifting camera positions make it practically impossible for the movie viewer *not* to be attending where she is meant to attend.

Variable framing in film is achieved by moving the camera closer or farther away from the objects being filmed. Cutting and camera movement are the two major processes for shifting framing: in the former, the actual process of the camera's change of position is not included in the shot; we jump from medium-range views, to close views, to far-off views with the traversal of the space between excised; in camera movement, as the name suggests, the passage of the camera from a long view to a close view is recorded within the shot. Reframing can also be achieved optically through devices such as zooming-in and changing lenses. These mechanical means for changing the framing of an on-screen object or event give rise to three formal devices for directing the movie audience's attention: indexing, bracketing, and scaling. Indexing occurs when a camera is moved toward an object. The motion toward the object functions ostensively, like the gesture of pointing. It indicates that the viewer ought to be looking in the direction the camera is moving, if the camera's movement is being recorded, or in the direction toward which the camera is aimed or pointing, if we have been presented with the shot via a cut.

When a camera is moved towards an array, it screens out everything beyond the frame. To move a camera toward an object either by cutting

or camera movement generally has the force of indicating that what is important at this moment is what is on screen, what is in the perimeter of the frame. That which is not inside the frame has been *bracketed*, excluded. It should not, and in fact it literally cannot, at the moment it is bracketed, be attended to. At the same time, bracketing has an inclusionary dimension, indicating that what is inside the frame or bracket is important. A standard camera position will mobilize both the exclusionary and inclusionary dimensions of the bracket to control attention, though the relative degree may vary as to whether a given bracketing is more important for what it excludes, rather than what it includes, and vice-versa.

There is also a standard deviation from this use of bracketing. Often the important element of a scene is placed outside the frame so that it is not visible onscreen, e.g., the child-killer in the early part of Fritz Lang's *M*. Such scenes derive a great deal of their expressive power just because they subvert the standard function of bracketing.

As the camera is moved forward, it not only indexes and places brackets around the objects in front of it; it also changes their scale. Whether by cutting or camera movement, as the camera nears the gun on the table, the gun simultaneously appears larger and occupies more screen space. When the camera is pulled away from the table, the gun occupies less screen space. This capacity to change the scale of objects through camera positioning—a process called “scaling”—can be exploited for expressive or magical effects. Scaling is also a lever for directing attention. Enlarging the screen size of an object generally has the force of stating that this object, or gestalt of objects, is the important item to attend to at this moment in the movie.

Scaling, bracketing, and indexing are three different ways of directing the movie spectator's attention through camera positioning. In general, a standard camera positioning, whether executed by cutting or camera movement, will employ all three of these means. But one can easily think of scenes in which the bracket is reoriented, but the scaling stays effectively the same, for example, a lateral pan as a character walks toward the edge of the frame. Likewise, a camera movement might be important for what it indexes rather than for whatever changes occur in the bracketing or the scaling: there are moving shots in the early Italian

film *Cabiria*, for example, where the camera nudges a few feet forward in a spectacle scene in order to point the viewer's eye in a certain direction, though neither the bracket nor the scale of the objects in the scene are changed appreciably. Both the swamp scene and the trolley-car scene in *Sunrise* are artistically important for the way in which they call attention to the bracket, rather than for their scaling or indexing. However, bracketing, scaling, and indexing can be employed in tandem, and when they are, they afford very powerful means by which the movie-maker controls the audience's attention. We suddenly see a close-up of a gun, indexed, scaled, and bracketed as the important object in the scene, and then the bracket is changed—we see a medium shot in which the gun is being pointed at the heroine by the villain, telling us that now the important thing about the gun is its role within this newly framed context or gestalt. The constant reframing of the action that is endemic to movies enables the spectator to follow the action perfectly, and, so to say, automatically.

Adaptations of stage technology, of course, could probably establish theatrical means that would be functionally equivalent to the scaling, bracketing, and indexing functions of movies. Magnifying mirrors might be used to enlarge stage details at appropriate moments; the leg curtains could be motorized to constantly reframe the action; and indexing might be approximated by use of revolving stages that rotate the important characters and actions toward the audience. If these devices were not too distracting in and of themselves, they might provide the theater director with attentional levers that are functionally equivalent to scaling, bracketing, and indexing. However, these devices are not customary in theater as we presently know it, and our project here is to contrast movies as they are with theater as it currently is.

Of course, *films* can be made without variable framing; but *movies* rely on variable framing to automatize the spectator's attention. Also, variable framing is not unique to movies; other film genres employ it. Yet it is key to why movies are accessible; as we have noted, it contributes to the intensity of engagement movies promote. Through variable framing, the director assures that the spectator is attending where and when she should. The action and its details unfold in

such a way that every element that is relevant is displayed at a distance that makes it eminently recognizable and, in a sequence that is intelligible. Ideally, variable framing allows us to see just what we need to see at changing distances and at cadences that render the action perspicuous. The action is analytically broken down into its most salient elements, distilled, that is, in a way that makes it extremely legible. This kind of clarity, which is bequeathed to the audience automatically by variable framing, contrasts strongly with the depiction of action in theatrical representations. There, the depiction is not analytic but a matter of physical enactment, generally occurring in something approximating real time, and presented at a fixed distance to each viewer. Of course, theatrical action is abstracted, simplified, for the sake of legibility, often employing emblematic gestures. It is clearer, that is, than the actions we encounter in everyday life. But theatrical action is not as clear and analytically distinct as movie action as portrayed by variable framing. Movie action, given the way it can be organized through camera positioning, is also far more intelligible than the unstaged events we witness in everyday life. This is an important feature that helps account for the way in which movies grip us.

Our experience of actions and events in movies differs radically from our normal experiences; movie actions and events are so organized, so automatically intelligible, and so clear. The arresting thing about movies, *contra* realist theories, is not that they create the illusion of reality, but that they reorganize and construct, through variable framing, actions and events with an economy, legibility, and coherence that are not only automatically available, but which surpass, in terms of their immediately perceptible basic structure, naturally encountered actions and events. Movie actions evince visible order and identity to a degree not found in everyday experience. This quality of uncluttered clarity gratifies the mind's quest for order, thereby intensifying our engagement with the screen.

So far, our speculations about the sources of the power of movies have been restricted to what would have classically been considered the medium's "cinematic features": pictorial representation and variable framing. This, of course, does not reflect a belief that these elements are uniquely

cinematic, but only that they are features that help account for movies' power, the capacity to engender what appears to be an unprecedentedly widespread and intense level of engagement. There is another core defining feature of what we are calling movies that needs to be treated: this is that they are fictional narratives. The question naturally arises to what degree this fact about movies can help explain their power.

The fact that movies tend to be narrative, concerned primarily with depictions of human actions, immediately suggests one of the reasons they are accessible. For narrative is, in all probability, our most pervasive and familiar means of explaining human action. If you ask me why George is watering the tulips, I may answer that George intends to have, or wants, a beautiful garden, and that he believes that he can't have a beautiful garden unless he waters the tulips. So I say he undertakes to water the tulips. You might ask me how he formed the desire to have a beautiful garden. I may refer to either his belief that this is a means to being a good citizen or his guilt about never caring for his father's garden, or both if his action is overdetermined. If you ask, where did he get the notion that the garden would not be beautiful unless he watered it, I say he read it in a book called *Beautiful Gardens* on May 17, 1953. Now if we tried to sum up this somewhat banal explanation of George's action, a narrative would probably be the likeliest, though not the only, means of organizing our information: George, racked with guilt feelings about his father's tulips and convinced that a beautiful garden is a means to the coveted ideal of good citizenship, decided to have a beautiful garden; and when he read, on May 17, 1953, that such gardens could not be had without watering the tulips, he went out and watered the tulips (on May 18). We might add that he continued to do so happily ever after. Insofar as this sort of narrative is one of the most common forms of human explanation, and insofar as much movie narration belongs to this category, movies will be familiar and accessible. Moreover, the explanatory quality of such narration will also contribute to the clarity of movies.

Of course, the logical relations that subtend this sort of narrative, at crucial points, remind one, and are parasitic upon, those of practical inference. If I am George, for example, I reason thusly: I want a beautiful garden; I do not believe

I can secure a beautiful garden unless I water the tulips; therefore, I proceed to water the tulips. What makes narratives of the sort that I told above explanatory is that they, at nodal moments, reflect processes of practical reasoning. Practical reasoning is part of everyone's life. And the actions of others are intelligible to me when I can see them as consequences of the sort of practical reasoning I employ. Insofar as movie narratives depict the human actions of characters in forms that are reflective of the logic of practical inference, the movies will be widely accessible, since practical inference is a generic form of human decision-making.

Undoubtedly, this discussion of narrative may be too broad and too abstract to be of much use to the film analyst. In all probability nothing of great interest would be gained in film studies by showing that a series of scenes reflected a series of practical inferences on the part of characters. Rather, the film scholar will be interested in an analysis of the characteristic forms of plotting found in movies; she will want these described more specifically than they were in the preceding discussion. And she will want to know what it is about these forms, if anything, that contributes to the power of movies.

In a recent paper on film suspense,¹² I attempted to identify what I think is the most basic form of movie plotting, and I would like to take advantage of those speculations now. My position owes a great deal to the Soviet filmmaker and theoretician V.I. Pudovkin.¹³ Pudovkin, like his teacher, L. Kuleshov, studied American movies, contrasting them with Russian films in order to discern what made the American films of the twenties more effective on popular audiences than were comparable Russian films. Pudovkin and Kuleshov undertook this investigation, of course, in order to calculate the best means for creating a new Soviet cinema for the masses. The theories of filmmaking they produced were meant to instruct other filmmakers in technique and praxis. As is well known, Pudovkin and Kuleshov tended to become very prescriptive in these matters, a tendency for which they have been duly chastised ever since. But whatever their dogmatism, we should not overlook the fact that beneath their debatable prescriptions about the way films should be made, they often had valuable insights into the way in which popular films,

especially Hollywood movies, were actually constructed. What Pudovkin has to say about movie narration is a case in point.

A story film will portray a sequence of scenes or events, some appearing earlier, some later. A practical problem that confronts the filmmaker is the way in which these scenes are to be connected, i.e., what sort of relation the earlier scenes should bear to the later ones. Pudovkin recommends—as a primary, though not exclusive, solution—that earlier scenes be related to later scenes as questions are to answers. If a giant shark appears offshore, unbeknownst to the local authorities, and begins to ravage lonely swimmers, this scene or series of scenes (or this event or series of events) raises the question of whether the shark will ever be detected. This question is likely to be answered in some later scene when someone figures out why all those swimmers are missing. At that point, when it is learnt that the shark is very, very powerful and nasty to boot, the question arises about whether it can be destroyed or driven away. The ensuing events in the film serve to answer that question. Or, if some atomic bombs are skyjacked in the opening scenes, this generates questions about who stole them and for what purposes. Once the generally nefarious purposes of the hijacking are established, the question arises concerning whether these treacherous intents can be thwarted. Or, for a slightly more complicated scenario, shortly after a jumbo jet takes off, we learn that the entire crew has just died from food poisoning while also learning that the couple in first class is estranged. These scenes raise the questions of whether the plane will crash and whether the couple in first class will be reconciled by their common ordeal. Maybe we also ask whether the alcoholic priest in coach will find God again. It is the function of the later scenes in the film to answer these questions.

Of course, the narrative organization of Hollywood films is far more complex than these examples suggest, and I have tried to develop this subject with more precision elsewhere.¹⁴ For present purposes, let us say that, as is suggested by the writings of Pudovkin, the core narrative structures of Hollywood-type films—the movies discussed in this paper—involve generating questions that ensuing scenes answer. Not all narrative films employ this approach. Often, modernist films generate questions—e.g., did I meet her at

Marienbad before?—without supplying any answers. Or, I might chronicle my day at the beach: first I had a hot dog, then I put on suntan lotion, then I swam, then I went home. Surely we can conceive of a home movie like this, where none of the early scenes raised any questions, and where none of the later ones supplied any answers. Thus, to narrate by generating questions internal to the film that subsequent scenes answer is a distinctive form of narration. Admittedly, this is not a form unique to films or movies, for it is also exploited in mystery novels, adventure stories, Harlequin romances, Marvel comics, and so on. Nevertheless, it is the most characteristic narrative approach in movies.

How can this be proven? The best suggestion one can make here is to embrace the question/answer model of movie narration—what I call the *erotetic* model of narrative—and then turn on your TV, watch old movies and new ones, TV adventure series and romances, domestic films and foreign popular films. Ask yourself why the later scenes in the films make sense in the context of the earlier scenes. My prediction is that you will be surprised by the extent to which later scenes are answering questions raised earlier, or are at least providing information that will contribute to such answers. In adopting the hypothesis that the narrative structure of a randomly selected movie is fundamentally a system of internally generated questions that the movie goes on to answer, you will find that you have hold of a relationship that enables you to explain what makes certain scenes specially key: they either raise questions or answer them, or perform related functions including sustaining questions already raised, or incompletely answering a previous question, or answering one question but then introducing a new one.

Apart from the confirmation of the hypothesis afforded by this confrontation with empirical data, further support for the question/answer model might be gained by using it, not to analyze, but to develop movie scenarios. For when certain complexities and qualifications are added to the model of the erotetic narrative, it is a very serviceable guide for producing stories that strike one as typically “movieish,” especially in their economy. Partial confirmation of the question/answer model is its capacity to direct the simulation of movie scenarios.

If the model of the erotetic narrative captures the characteristic narrative form of movies, then perhaps we can note certain features of this mode of narration which will shed light on the power of movies. A movie scene or a series of depicted events make certain questions salient. An orphan wanders the street, importuning adults needfully. Will the orphan find a surrogate parent? This could be answered in the next scene, or it could take the entire film to answer. However, by characterizing the function of this scene as that of saliently posing a question, we have put ourselves in a position to account for one of the most notable features of audience responses to linear narrative movies, that is, expectation. Given the erotetic model, we can say what it is that audiences expect: they expect answers to the questions that earlier events have made salient—will the shark be stopped; will the jumbo jet crash? If it is a general feature of our cognitive make-up that, all things being equal, we not only want but expect answers to questions that have assertively been put before us, this helps explain our widespread, intense engagement with movies. Even if the question is as insignificant to us as whether the suburban adolescent in *Risky Business* will be found out by his parents, our curiosity keeps us riveted to the screen until it is satisfied.

Though space does not allow for a full elaboration of the matter, important distinctions can be made among the different types of questions that animate the erotetic movie narrative. One such distinction can be drawn between micro-questions and macro-questions. A scene or an event may raise a question that is immediately answered in the succeeding scene or by the succeeding event, or by a scene or event temporally proximate to the questioning scene. For example, some burglars trigger an alarm. This raises the question of whether the authorities will hear it. Next, there is a scene of two policemen reading magazines in their squad car; they look up and switch on their siren, raising the question of whether they will arrive at the scene of the crime on time, and so on. Such localized networks of questions and answers are “micro” in nature. They connect two individual scenes or a limited series of scenes and sequences. But movies are also generally animated by macro-questions, ones for which we await answers throughout most of the film, and which may be thought of as organ-

izing the bulk of significant action in the movie—indeed, the micro-questions are generally hierarchically subordinate to the macro-questions. For an example of a macro-question, consider *Wargames*; at a certain point most of the action is devoted to answering the question of whether nuclear destruction can be averted. Of course, movies often have more than one macro-question. *Into the Night* asks both whether the romantic leads can escape the Middle Eastern villains *and* whether this couple will become lovers. Both macro-questions are answered by means of roughly the same sequences of action, and the micro-questions and answers that structure those sequences tend, finally, to dovetail with the answers to these presiding macro-questions. What is called “closure” in movies can be explained as that moment when all the saliently posed and sustained questions that the movie has raised have been answered.

A successful erotetic narrative tells you, literally, everything you want to know about the action being depicted, i.e., it answers every question, or virtually every question, that it has chosen to pose saliently. (I say “virtually” in order to accommodate endings such as that in the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, where the audience is left with one last pregnant question.) But even countenancing these cases, an erotetic movie narrative has an extraordinary degree of neatness and intellectually appealing compactness. It answers all the questions that it assertively presents to the audience, and the largest portion of its actions is organized by a small number of macro-questions, with little remainder. The flow of action approaches an ideal of uncluttered clarity. This clarity contrasts vividly with the quality of the fragments of actions and events we typically observe in everyday life. Unlike those in real life, the actions observed in movies have a level of intelligibility, due to the role they play in the erotetic narrative’s system of questions and answers. Because of the question/answer structure, the audience is left with the impression that it has learned everything important to know concerning the action depicted. How is this achieved? By assertively introducing a selected set of pressing questions and then answering them—by controlling expectation by the manner in which questions are posed. This imbues the film with an aura of clarity while also affording an intense satisfaction

concerning our cognitive expectations and our propensity for intelligibility.

The clarity imparted by the erotetic narrative in movies is, of course, reinforced by other clarity-producing methods, such as directing audience attention through the single shot or variable framing. These devices are the filmmaker's means of visual narration. They enable him to raise questions *visually*: the question "Will Jones be shot?" can be "asked" by focusing on a close-up of a gun. At the same time, the visual depiction of an action can either sustain or answer a question. "Will Eli Wallach die by hanging?" can be sustained by showing him teetering on a chair with a noose around his neck, or answered by showing us Clint Eastwood severing the rope in an act of super-human marksmanship. Of course, many of the pressing questions that drive movies forward are not primarily set forth visually but are stated explicitly in the dialogue, or are already implied in the scripting of the action. Nevertheless, the devices of visual narration, if not the original source of the questions, help make those questions salient.

The visual devices of movies were earlier described in terms of the type of clarity they afforded the audience, of how they enable the audience to see all that it is relevant for them to see at the appropriate distance and in the appropriate sequence. At the same time, another sort of clarity has been attributed to the erotetic narrative as a primary ground of the power of movies. How do these two "clarities" relate to each other? Well, generally in movies, devices such as scaling, bracketing, and indexing will be employed so that the first item or the first gestalt of items that the audience is led to attend to in a given shot is the item or gestalt that is most relevant to the progress of the narrative—to the posing, sustaining, or answering of those questions the movie elects to answer. The importance of variable framing for movies is the potential it affords for assuring that the audience attends to everything that is *relevant*, and that it does so automatically, so to speak. "Relevance" is here determined by the narrative, or, more specifically the questions and answers that drive the narrative, which in turn are saliently posed and answered in important ways by means of variable framing.

In order for this account to be adequate, certain qualifications need to be acknowledged.

While generally processes such as variable framing are coordinated with the narrative for the purpose of emphasizing the first item, or gestalt of items, seen by the audience, there are standard deviations to this principle. These deviations are often employed in thrillers for shock effect: the important subject, say, the killer, is hidden in the shot in such a way that the audience only comes to see him belatedly (but unavoidably). In terms of our account, these deviations are not destructive counterexamples, because they still illustrate how the flow of narration is kept under strict control and the audience in rapt attention.

Standard movies also often contain much material that is digressive from the point of view of the erotetic narrative, for example, a melodic interlude from the heroine by the campfire in a Western. While this paper cannot fully develop a theory of such digressions, it will suggest that the most important digressions typically found in movies are a function of the sub-genres the movies in question belong to (one could go on to explain those digressions by analyzing the sub-genres they most frequently appear in and, perhaps, proceed to analyze the power of those sub-genres).

We began by addressing the issue of the power of movies, which was understood as a question concerning the ways in which movies have engaged the widespread, intense response of untutored audiences throughout the century. We have dealt with the issue of the widespread response to movies by pointing to those features of movies that make them particularly accessible. We have also dealt with our intense engagement with movies in terms of the impression of coherence they impart, i.e., their easily grasped, indeed, their almost unavoidable, clarity. The accessibility of movies is at least attributable to their use of pictorial representation, variable framing, and narrative, the latter being the most pervasive form of explaining human actions. Their clarity is at least a function of variable framing in coordination with the erotetic narrative, especially where erotetic narration and variable framing are coordinated by the principle that the first item or gestalt of items the audience apprehends be that which, out of alternative framings, is most important to the narration. In short, this thesis holds that the power of movies—their capacity to evoke unrivaled widespread and intense response—is,

first and foremost, at least a result of their deployment of pictorial representation, variable framing, and the erotetic narrative.

It will undoubtedly be noted that in this attempt to account for the power of movies, we have restricted our purview to features in movies which address the *cognitive* faculties of the audience. This is absolutely central to the argument. For only by focusing on cognitive capacities, especially ones as deeply embedded as pictorial representation, practical reason, and the drive to get answers to our questions, will we be in the best position to find the features of movies that account for their phenomenally *widespread* effectiveness; since cognitive capacities, at the level discussed, seem the most plausible candidate for what mass-movie audiences have *in common*. That is, the question of the power of movies involves explaining how peoples of different cultures, societies, nations, races, creed, educational backgrounds, age groups, and sexes can find movies easily accessible and gripping. Thus, the power of movies must be connected to some fairly generic features of human organisms to account for their power *across* class, cultural, and educational boundaries. The structures of perception and cognition are primary examples of fairly generic features of humans. Consequently, it seems that if we can suggest the ways in which movies are designed to engage and excite cognitive and perceptual structures, we will have our best initial approximation of their *generic* power.

Some qualifications, of course, are in order. First, we are not claiming that people do not respond intensely to forms other than movies; indeed, some people respond more intensely to other art forms than they do to movies. There are opera buffs and balletomanes, after all. But this is compatible with the claim we are examining, that there is something special about the widespread and intense, though not necessarily universal, response that movies have been observed to command.

Next, we are not denying that there may be levers beyond those we have discussed that also figure in the account of the power of movies. Marketing structures, including advertising, are important elements, as well as factors such as the transportability and reproducibility of movies. Research in these areas should not be abandoned. However, considerations along these lines do not obviate the present sort of speculation, since there

must still be something about the product, so marketed, that sustains interest.

Pictorial representations, variable framing, erotetic narration, and the interrelation of these elements in the ways proposed will, at the very least, be constituents of any account of the power of movies. This paper does not pretend to have offered a *complete* account of why movies are powerful—its modesty is signaled by the hedge “at the very least.” Perhaps movies employ other clarifying features, such as music, that require analysis. Furthermore, apart from the question of why movies are powerful, we may wish to pursue different, but related, questions about why certain movies or groups of movies are powerful for certain groups of people; how do movies, or at least certain varieties of movies, engage particular classes, nations, genders, and so on. Theoretical interest in these questions would undoubtedly lead to a focus on elements of structure and content that have not been addressed here, since we have been concerned with the *generic* power of movies, not the power of movies for specific times, locales, sexes, and interest groups. However, nothing we have said suggests an objection in principle to these more specific questions, which questions, of course, will, in all probability, lead to speculation about aspects of audiences over and above their cognitive faculties. Social conditioning and affective psychology, *appropriately historicized*, must be introduced to explain the power of given movies for target groups. Sociology, anthropology, and certain forms of psychoanalysis are likely to be useful in such investigations. We can therefore continue to examine the power of movies by asking about the power of certain movies for historically specific audiences. However, if we wish to explain the power of movies for the world community, then pictorial representation, variable framing, and the erotetic narrative will be key elements in our account because of the ways in which they address common cognitive and perceptual capacities.

Notes

The preparation of this paper has benefited from extensive discussions with David Bordwell, as well as from helpful comments by Annette Michelson and Ian Jarvie.

- 1 See André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), especially vol. I.
- 2 For an example of an author who employs these approaches, see John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, TV, Video* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).
- 3 For detailed criticism of the Bazinian approach see my "Concerning Photographic and Cinematic Representation," forthcoming in the journal *Dialectics and Humanism*. For extensive criticism of contemporary attributions of realistic psychological effects to viewers, see my "Address to the Heathen," *October*, #23, 1982, and my "A Reply to Heath," *October*, #27, 1983.
- 4 The question of film's ideological operation is also a good one, one I shall take up in another essay currently in preparation.
- 5 This essay is in Christian Metz's *The Imaginary Signifier* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982). I criticize Metz's approach in a review of this book in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Winter 1984.
- 6 J.E. Hochberg and V. Brooks, "Pictorial Recognition as an Unlearned Ability," *American Journal of Psychology*, #75, 1962, pp. 624–628.
- 7 Ichitaro Hondo, "History of Japanese Painting," in *Painting 14–19th Centuries: Pageant of Japanese Art* (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1957), vol. II, pp. 54–55.
- 8 J.B. Deregowski, E.S. Muldrow, and W.F. Muldrow, "Pictorial Recognition in a Remote Ethiopian Population," *Perception*, #1, 1972, pp. 417–425.
- 9 John M. Kennedy, *A Psychology of Picture Perception* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974), p. 79.
- 10 K.J. Hayes and C. Hayes, "Picture Perception in a Home-Raised Chimpanzee," *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, #46, 1953, pp. 470–474.
- 11 John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 51–52.
- 12 Noel Carroll, "Toward a Theory of Film Suspense," in *Persistence of Vision: The Journal of the Film Faculty of the City University of New York*, #1, 1984.
- 13 V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting* (New York: Grove Press, 1960).
- 14 Carroll, "Toward a Theory of Film Suspense," op. cit

Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers, and the Gendered Spectator: The “New” Aesthetics

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I

At the heart of recent feminist theorizing about art is the claim that various forms of representation – painting, photography, film – assume a “male gaze.” The notion of the gaze has both a literal and a figurative component. Narrowly construed, it refers to actual looking. Broadly, or more metaphorically, it refers to a way of thinking about, and acting in, the world.

In literal terms, the gaze is male when men do the looking. Men look both as spectators and as characters within works. In figurative terms, to say that the gaze is male refers to a way of seeing which takes women as its object. In this broad sense, the gaze is male whenever it directs itself at, and takes pleasure in, women, where women function as erotic objects. Many feminists claim that most art, most of the time, places women in this position. In Laura Mulvey’s words, man is the bearer of the gaze, woman its object.¹

Mary Devereaux, “Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers and the Gendered Spectator: The ‘New’ Aesthetics” in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48(4), 1990, pp. 337–347. Reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons.

Feminist theorists, like many other theorists, take as basic the tenet that no vision, not even artistic vision, is neutral vision. All vision is colored by the “spectacles” through which we see the world. The notion that all seeing is “a way of seeing” contrasts sharply with the traditional realist assumption that observation can be cleanly separated from interpretation, at least under certain ideally specified conditions. In part, feminist theorists can be understood as reiterating a familiar, but still important, objection to the naive notion of the innocent eye. As E. H. Gombrich convincingly argues, observation is never innocent. In his words, “Whenever we receive a visual impression, we react by docketing it, filing it, grouping it in one way or another, even if the impression is only that of an inkblot or a fingerprint. . . . [T]he postulate of an unbiased eye demands the impossible.”² Observation is always conditioned by perspective and expectation.

Yet, feminist claims that our representations inscribe a male gaze involve more than a denial of the eye’s innocence. They involve asserting the central role that gender plays in formulating those expectations. Feminist theorists insist, moreover, that these expectations are

disproportionately affected by male needs, beliefs and desires. Both men and women have learned to see the world through male eyes. So, for example, women throughout their lives expend enormous amounts of time and energy and money making themselves "beautiful." In undertaking this costly process, women judge themselves according to internalized standards of what is pleasing to men. As Sandra Bartky observes, adolescent girls "learn to appraise themselves as they are shortly to be appraised."³ In this sense, the eyes are female, but the gaze is male.

Feminist theorists object to seeing the world "through male eyes." They equate the male gaze with patriarchy. The notion of patriarchy is key here. Defined as a social system structured upon the supremacy of the father and the legal dependence of wives and children, patriarchy makes women depend upon men not only for status and privilege, but for their very identity. The assumption is that this arrangement oppresses women. It also, as both feminists and non-feminists have argued, oppresses men, although not necessarily in the same way as it oppresses women.

This oppression occurs at the symbolic as well as the material level. Women, as the first editorial of the film journal, *Camera Obscura*, announced, "are oppressed not only economically and politically, but also in the very forms of reasoning, signifying and symbolical exchange of our culture."⁴ Thus, to take a familiar but powerful example, in English "he" functions as the unmarked term, "she" as the marked term. "His" attributes define all humanity (i.e., "mankind"); "hers" define only women. The higher priority assigned to male attributes passes unnoticed because our language, like our thinking, equates "male" gender with "gender neutral."

Art, as another form of symbolical exchange, also participates in this oppression. In both its high and low forms, feminist theorists argue, art inscribes "a masculinist discourse" which we learn to reproduce in our everyday lives. Feminist theorists here draw on the insight that art both reflects the conditions of life and helps to establish and maintain them. The male gaze inscribed in art triggers what Elizabeth Flynn and Patrocinio Schweickart describe as a deep-seated impulse for women to adapt themselves to the male viewpoint.⁵ Griselda Pollock goes further,

arguing that the history of art itself is a series of representational practices which actively encourage definitions of sexual difference that contribute to the present configuration of sexual politics and power relations.⁶

For this reason, much of feminist theorizing about art is critical in tone. From its perspective, the artistic canon is androcentric, and hence, politically repressive. In Schweickart's words, "For a woman, then, books do not necessarily spell salvation."⁷ Briefly summarized, the feminist critique of representation rests on the equation: the medium = male = patriarchal = oppressive.

Some will greet this equation as exaggerated, even absurd. The idea that art is political or ideologically charged contradicts the deeply held belief that art speaks to and for all human beings. Socrates' charges against the poets notwithstanding, the Western European tradition characterizes art as liberating, enlightening, uplifting. Art's effects are positive; the experiences it offers intrinsically valuable. In categorizing art with other forms of patriarchal oppression, feminist theorists reject the division of art and politics basic to Anglo-American aesthetics.

The implications of this rejection are important and far-reaching. In dividing the artworld into male and female, feminist theorists irrevocably link the production and consumption of art with issues of power and control. Outside the Anglo-American paradigm, this linkage is not new. The Marxist tradition in aesthetics has long placed the concept of power at the center of the discussion of art. Marxism's emphasis on how class and other social forces and practices enter into the reading of any text lays the groundwork for feminist investigations of how gender enters the exchange with the text.

What is original to feminism is the linkage of art with sexual politics. Issues of sexual politics lie at the center of current academic debate in English Departments, Film Studies programs and feminist theory groups. Aesthetics, at least in America, has been slower to notice or respond to this debate. Although an occasional feminist paper has appeared on the program at the annual American Society for Aesthetics meetings, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* has prior to this writing never published a work of feminist theory. This omission is even more surprising

given that philosophers from Plato to Nelson Goodman have been preoccupied with issues of representation – an issue that feminism, from another direction, centrally addresses.

This lack of attention to issues transforming the discussion of art in other disciplines is frequently attributed to a difference in vocabulary. Feminist theory has its roots in Foucault and Lacan, not in Plato, Aristotle and Kant. Confronted with talk of “mirror stages,” “voyeurism,” and “difference,” practitioners of traditional aesthetics may feel trapped by the jargon of a foreign discourse, one not bound by rules their own training insists upon. Stanley Cavell describes the experience of reading these works as involving a different set of satisfactions.⁸ Whatever the promise of these satisfactions, some will maintain, it is difficult not to lose patience with contemporary writers whose texts demand the exegetical labors normally reserved for the dead and the “truly great.”

On this account, feminist theories remain marginalized due both to their difficulty and unfamiliarity. But this explanation does not, I think, tell the whole story. Regular readers of the *Journal* have no doubt noticed the growing number of articles dealing with the latest developments in literary theory (the work of Stanley Fish, Jacques Derrida, Mikhail Bakhtin), hermeneutics (Hans-Georg Gadamer) and the philosophy of language (Donald Davidson). In each of these cases, vocabulary and methodology pose formidable challenges. Not every reader will find such challenges worth the time or effort. But clearly, in aesthetics, as in philosophy generally, difficulty alone never warrants exclusion.

The reason feminist theories of art and aesthetics have so long remained unmentioned lies deeper, I think. At stake in the debate over feminism are deeply entrenched assumptions about the universal value of art and aesthetic experience. The overthrow of these assumptions – linchpins of aesthetic theory since Kant – constitutes what art historian, Linda Nochlin, describes as a Kuhnian paradigm shift.⁹ The new paradigm is a feminist paradigm and what we face is a conceptual revolution. If I am right, then the deeper explanation for the lack of attention to feminist theories lies in the natural resistance of those suddenly faced with the overthrow of an entrenched way of thinking.

As recent developments in the philosophy of science and ethics highlight, aesthetics cannot simply “add on” feminist theories as it might add new works by Goodman, Arthur Danto or George Dickie. To take feminism seriously involves rethinking our basic concepts and recasting the history of the discipline. And that requires more than adding women’s names to the canonical list of great philosophers.

The requirement that we engage in such radical rethinking may seem burdensome and unnecessary. It is helpful to the self-esteem of women or to women who are feminists. But what of those who do not fit into either of these two categories? What, they may wonder, do they have to gain from feminist aesthetics?

In part to answer such questions, I want in the next section to return to the notion of the male gaze. In examining this key feminist notion more carefully, I hope to make clear the intrinsic interest of this approach to aesthetics and to suggest why its concerns merit serious consideration.

To this end, I want to investigate how gendered vision works in one specific representational practice, namely film. Film is a natural choice for such a study because it is a medium so fundamentally built around the activity of looking. It is also, not surprisingly, the medium where the male gaze has been most extensively discussed.

The relationship of gender and cinematic vision is extremely complicated. A complete analysis of this topic would require several hundred pages. In what follows, I focus on two key claims, namely, that in cinema the gaze is male and that the cinematic text is a male text. I seek to make clear how these claims should be understood and then to situate them philosophically. In confining myself to what I take to be the core claims of this debate, I will of necessity leave aside many important, but internal, issues in film theory.

II

Despite the extensive literature which refers to and relies upon it, the concept of the male gaze remains difficult to understand. It is so in part because, as noted above, the male gaze refers both to literal and metaphorical vision. A further

difficulty in understanding the male gaze arises from the failure to distinguish three different gazes: that of film-maker, the characters within the film and the spectator. With each of these gazes, literal and figurative seeing interact in a variety of ways.

In the first case, that of the film-maker, someone looks through the viewfinder of a camera, someone (often the same person) looks at the rushes after the day's shooting and someone looks at the film's final cut. This person may be male, but need not be. Women, too, make movies and have done so since the early days of the medium (e.g., Maya Deren, Dorothy Artnert, Leni Riefenstahl).

What does it mean then to say that at this level the gaze is male? It means that despite the presence of women directors and screenwriters, the institutions of film-making remain largely populated by men. Not all films have male authors, but whoever makes movies must work nonetheless within a system owned and operated by men. At the level of the film-maker, then, men do not always do the looking, but they generally control who does. The male gaze is not always male, but it is *always male-dominated*.

By male-dominated, feminist theorists mean male-gendered, not simply possessed of male anatomy. A key move distinguishes sex from gender. A child is born sexed; through education and experience, it acquires gender. On this account, education and experience create the particular way of seeing which the term, "the male gaze," describes. Male institutional control thus refers not to the anatomy of film world personnel, which includes both men and women, but to the way film, however authored, contributes to the hegemony of men over women.

From a feminist point of view, this control matters because it "builds in" a preference for a particular type of film, i.e., one which positions women in ways consistent with patriarchal assumptions. Movies promote a way of seeing which takes man as subject, women as object. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* puts the point succinctly. "Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth."¹⁰

As de Beauvoir explains, women, unlike men, do not learn to describe the world from their own

point of view. As the "other," woman learns to submerge or renounce her subjectivity. She finds her identity in the subjectivity of the men to whom she is attached (father, husband, lover). In the eyes of men, she finds her identity as the object of men's desire.

In arguing that cinema, too, assigns woman this position, feminist theorists link male control of film institutions with a patriarchal way of seeing. At this point it should be clear that in attempting to describe the literal gaze of the film-maker, the question of whether men or women do the looking is not at root the issue. The real issue centers on whether, whoever stands behind the camera, a patriarchal way of seeing the world prevails. The discussion of the literal gaze thus very quickly becomes a discussion of the figurative gaze.

I do not want to deny the heuristic usefulness of talking about "literal" looking in film. Someone does look through the lens of the camera, and film-going is irrefutably a visual experience. Moreover, the medium itself offers a range of devices for representing what characters on screen themselves see, e.g., the long sequences in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* in which we see what the protagonist, Scottie, sees as he follows Madeleine.

A deeper and more damaging objection to the literal/figurative distinction emerges from the claim that literal seeing is always already figurative. Men – like women – do not simply look. Their looking – where and when they do it and at what – mimics a particular way of thinking about and acting in the world. So understood, seeing never escapes a way of seeing.

How then does the figurative way of seeing deemed "male" translate to the screen? How are women represented from the male point of view? And, with what effect on the spectator? To answer these questions requires shifting our attention from the film-maker's gaze to the manipulation of the gaze within film. At the textual level, feminist theorists have focused most directly on the story films of Hollywood as opposed to the international art cinema, experimental film or documentary film. Attention to the Hollywood film arose naturally from the broad popularity and profound influence which this tradition exercised on American cultural life.

Feminist theorists initially attacked the Hollywood film for its patriarchal content. Early

feminist works such as Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape*¹¹ examined how the portraits of the Good Girl, the Vamp and the Dutiful Wife presented so forcefully in westerns, detective films and melodramas reinforced a cultural mythology. In film after film, that mythology defined the value of women as their value to men. The good girl was a dutiful daughter who preserved herself (i.e., her virginity) for the right man "to take" from her. The bad girl, in contrast, flaunts her sexuality indiscriminately, "losing" her virginity or "giving it away."

Haskell's broadly sociological approach understood movies to tell the same stories we heard outside the theatre. In the movies, as in life, good girls were rewarded, bad girls punished. Any alternative point of view, one which might tell a different tale or the same tale differently, was effectively excluded. Put in the strongest terms, the charge was that the Hollywood film "belonged to patriarchy."¹² This commitment need not be intentional. Nor need it be confined to the works of male directors. Yet, as an institution, cinema, like television, was held to participate in and help to perpetuate a system of social organization which assigns power and privilege by gender.

Admittedly, not all films perpetuate patriarchy. Individual films may resist this arrangement. The strong-headed heroines typically played by Katharine Hepburn, Lauren Bacall and Bette Davis do not conform to this stereotype, nor do films such as Howard Hawks' *His Girl Friday*. As feminist critics themselves have demonstrated, the films of Hollywood evidence more variation and internal tension than a charge of monolithic patriarchy allows.

In speaking of Hollywood film as "belonging to patriarchy," something more subtle is at work than overt stereotyping. At the simplest level, Haskell and others had maintained, film reinforced women's dependence on men. As noted above, women on screen regularly won their happiness in the service of others (Griffith's *Dear One*, Marion as the amiable spouse in *Shane*). When they depart from societal norms, as Hepburn's high-level diplomat does in *Woman of the Year*, they are revealed to be cold-hearted and in need of "re-education." Tess learns from her husband Sam to place work second to companionate time with spouse and the duties of parent-

ing. Those who refuse this role, find themselves alone and lonely (e.g., Tess' Aunt Ellen). Those who opt for illicit instead of married love, end up dead (e.g., Marion in *Psycho*, Alex in *Fatal Attraction*).

Thus, as Mary Ann Doane convincingly argues, at a more complex level, the Hollywood film functions as "a recuperative strategy" designed to return the wayward woman to the fold.¹³ This return operates both within the narrative and externally, in the narrative's effect on its female audience. Internally, the Hollywood narrative typically charts the course by which a woman in a non-normative role cedes her control to a man.¹⁴ The happy ending in which Tess returns to Sam serves externally to "recuperate" wayward members of the female audience as well. The message is that for a woman, unlike for a man, the satisfactions of solitude, work, or adventure cannot compare to those of caring for husband and children.

The classic Hollywood film reinforces this message stylistically by confining the spectator to the point of view of the narrative hero. In Tania Modleski's words, "the film spectator apparently has no choice but to identify with the male protagonist, who exerts an active, controlling gaze over a passive female object." By consistently stressing the man's point of view, the Hollywood film thus negates the female character's view.¹⁵

Stressing the male protagonist's point of view need not involve confining us consistently to his visual field. The one well-known experiment which confined us consistently to the first-person visual field of a character, Robert Montgomery's *The Lady in the Lake*, failed miserably to convey that character's figurative point of view. We saw what he saw, but we didn't feel what he felt. More typical narrative films, such as *The Big Sleep*, alternate between what the protagonist sees and what other characters see. Hawks gives us not only Marlowe looking at Vivian but Vivian looking at Marlowe. The gaze is thus not directly that of the protagonist.

Nevertheless, within the Hollywood film there is a long tradition of women performing for the camera. Women sing, dance, dress and undress, all before the steady, often adoring, gaze of an implied spectator. Frequently, female performance plays a role in the plot, as when Vivian

sings for Marlowe and the audience at Eddie Mars' nightclub. But whether playing fictional characters who sing and dance before an audience or not, Marlene Dietrich, Marilyn Monroe, Ingrid Bergman and other female "stars," perform for the camera. As Stanley Cavell has pointed out, in photographing beautiful women, the cinema has found one of the subjects most congenial to it. But "congenial" here means the congeniality of men making films for men.

The male controlled institutions of film-making thus place women on screen in a particular position. As eroticized objects, women are doubly victimized. As Ann Kaplan argues, the male gaze involves more than simply looking; it carries with it the threat of action and possession. This power to act and possess is not reciprocal. Women can receive and return a gaze, but they cannot act upon it.¹⁶

To be fully operative as a mechanism of oppression, the male gaze depends upon a second condition. Not only must looking come with some "back-up" – physical, economic, social – but "being looked at" must also activate some level of female narcissism. Women themselves must not be indifferent to the gaze turned upon them; they must have internalized a certain assignment of positions.¹⁷

It is this disequilibrium in power both inside and outside the arena of looking which makes the male gaze different from what some have called a female or gender-neutral gaze. Consider the oft-cited cases where men serve as the object of the gaze, as in the recent spate of Richard Gere movies (*Breathless*, *American Gigolo*). Despite the "role reversal," the degradation which women suffer in occupying the role of "looked at" is not matched by their male counterparts.

It would be useful at this point to make a distinction, one between objectification, aestheticization and degradation.¹⁸ "Objectification," as I am using the term, means no more than to make someone or something the object of my gaze. There is nothing inherently oppressive about objectification understood in this way. Nor is the filmic male gaze any more objectifying than any other gaze. Aestheticization, defined here, means simply treating people or things as objects of aesthetic contemplation. There is nothing inherently oppressive about aestheticization. Both objectification and aestheticization may be degrading, but

they need not be. "Degradation" is a complex notion, associated with such concepts as respect, human dignity and worth. To degrade is to demean or debase someone, where this involves not only failing to respect, but also, in some sense, actively diminishing the value or dignity of the person. Rape, slavery and torture provide three obvious examples of degradation.¹⁹

Given these distinctions, it is easy to see that male characters, like their female counterparts, may be objectified or even, as in the case of Richard Gere, aestheticized (or eroticized). And they, like women, may also be portrayed in degraded or less than fully human ways. It is with respect to actual degradation that the asymmetry between men and women reappears. For in the case of women, unlike that of men, real life degradation often runs parallel to portrayals of degradation. Because women frequently lack power off screen, they are more likely to be degraded by their portrayals on screen. Even if men are portrayed in degrading ways, their real life power shields them from actual degradation.

As I've said above, objectification and aestheticization are not in themselves degrading. Nevertheless, feminist theorists are correct that Hollywood films reflect and encourage a cultural proclivity to treat the female body and the female self *only* as objects of aesthetic contemplation. And they are also correct in suggesting that this way of treating women *is* degrading. While, as I have argued, movie-making and movie-watching cannot be held solely responsible for the oppression of women, feminist theorists rightly emphasize the connection between how we represent our lives and lived experience itself.

In turning, finally, to the effect of the film text on its spectators, I want first to consider the means by which the gender bias of many Hollywood films remains hidden. The Hollywood film conventionally presents its telling as, to quote de Beauvoir again, "absolute truth." It depends for its effect upon creating a narrative illusion. The film story must unfold transparently, as though happening before our very eyes. It is crucial to such film-making that it proceed without calling attention to itself as a story. In this, the stylistic conventions of Hollywood follow those of the 19th century realist novel. For a film to acknowledge its status as a story or fiction admits a point of view, a place from which its

story gets told. Devices such as Godard's use of stop-action and words written across the screen aim to resist narrative illusionism. They announce the film as a film, as a fiction, a construct.²⁰

For many feminists, as for many Marxists, the narrative illusion central to the classic Hollywood film is politically compromised. Hollywood films are said to foster strong character identification and full absorption in the action. This absorption in turn is believed to encourage viewer passivity. At its worst, warned Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, such film-making undermines individual autonomy. It renders its audience a "mass" easily manipulated in the interests of the status quo.

In an effort to encourage active, critically engaged spectatorship, feminist theorists often exaggerate the connection between conventional Hollywood techniques of storytelling and passive spectatorship. Passive spectatorship is not, however, restricted to Hollywood narratives, nor do all such films aim for, or achieve, such an effect, e.g., Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*. To the extent that the average Hollywood product *does* encourage passivity, it renders *both* male and female spectators passive. Unfortunately, feminist critics often lose sight of this point.

In calling for active reading to replace this passivity, feminist critiques of the Hollywood film here parallel Brecht's critique of Aristotelian drama. Both denounce what they see as efforts to elicit the passive empathy of the spectator; both ask for art to break the narrative illusion. However, feminist theorists go beyond Brecht's analysis to examine how identification differs in male and female spectators. Gender, they rightly assert, plays a key role in eliciting the empathy and identification typical of narrative film.

The analysis of film's effects on the spectator brings us to the third and, I would argue, most important site at which the male gaze operates. In developing a theory of spectatorship, feminist theorists move beyond an initial concern with film content and style to explore the mechanisms of viewing. To the question "how does film represent women?" is added the question "what sources of satisfaction do these representations of women offer the spectator?" At what many now call its second stage, feminist film theory shifts attention from the literary critical and sociological reading of individual films to the more broadly

theoretical project of describing the unconscious mechanisms involved in watching movies.²¹

Primary among these mechanisms is voyeuristic pleasure. In this view, enormously influential among film theorists, spectators derive erotic pleasure through the opportunities for looking which the cinema affords. As Christian Metz argues in *The Imaginary Signifier* (1975), the darkened theatre, the absence of the object viewed, and its inability to return the gaze all contribute to the idea that film viewing constitutes unauthorized looking.²² From its early association with the Nickelodeon, the motion picture has come to function as a metaphor for the illicit activity of the voyeur, as Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 film, *Rear Window*, illustrates. Lest one miss the point, Hitchcock makes L. B. Jeffries – an inveterate voyeur – a photographer.²³

The question of how film plays to our already existing desires, fantasies, and fears received one of its most influential treatments in Laura Mulvey's now classic, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Mulvey begins from the premise that film reflects the psychical obsessions of the society which produces it. In making this assumption, Mulvey, like most other second wave theorists, draws heavily on psychoanalysis, particularly Freud and Lacan. She sets out to analyze the characteristic sources of pleasure and unpleasure offered by the cinema.

Narrative cinema, by which she means narrative in the unself-conscious mode described above, provides the spectator with two sources of pleasure. First, it provides what Freud calls "scopophilic" pleasure, the pleasure of viewing another as an erotic object. As we saw above, this pleasure characteristically takes the form of looking at women. In film after film, women function both as erotic objects for characters within the movie, as Vivian does for Marlowe, and as erotic objects for the spectator in the movie-house, as Lauren Bacall does for us. Thus, women's presence on screen presupposes the appreciative glance of a male spectator.

Men, in contrast, only rarely function as eroticized objects for female (or male) spectators. Men, Mulvey points out, feel uncomfortable in such a role. Neither the ruling assumptions of patriarchy "nor the psychical structures that back it up" encourage the male "to gaze at his exhibitionist like."²⁴ Instead, man's role is to function

as the locus of narrative action. His role, on screen as off, involves shooting the bad guys and blazing the trails. The male movie star attracts our admiration and respect by his deeds. We are encouraged to *identify with* him, to imagine ourselves doing what he does.

In Freudian terms, the male functions as an "ego-ideal," not as an object of erotic desire. The possibility of identifying with this ego-ideal offers the spectator a second, contrasting source of pleasure, i.e., the pleasure of identifying with the characters projected on screen. Since, on Mulvey's analysis, it is the male hero who makes things happen and controls them, we typically identify with him. Thus, the spectator's gaze is male in two senses, both in its direction at women as objects of erotic fascination and in its identification with the male protagonist. The division of male and female roles on screen mimics traditional gender roles: women functioning as the passive objects of the viewer's gaze; men functioning as the active subjects of the viewer's imagination.

In playing to our existing desires, fantasies and fears, film also offers what Mulvey calls unpleasure. In the patriarchal unconscious, woman represents the threat of castration. This threat the Hollywood film typically meets in one of two ways. It may contain the threat posed by the mystery and fearsomeness of women by domesticating them, typically through marriage (e.g., *Notorious*), or, more drastically, by killing them off, as in *Fatal Attraction*. Alternatively, the threat may be denied altogether by elevating the woman to the status of a fetish. In the latter case, the woman becomes reassuring instead of dangerous.²⁵

To summarize, then, the male gaze refers to three interlocking forms of control. With respect to the film-maker, it refers to male control of the practices of film-making. This control leads, at the level of the film text, to a product whose content and style inscribe the patriarchal unconscious of the culture at large. Lastly, these devices position the male or female audience member to find in film a way of seeing which calms our fears and satisfies our desires.

This is a provocative account of film spectatorship. To ask who is doing the looking assumes all spectators are not similarly positioned, i.e., that factors such as gender have a role to play in

structuring – maybe even in constituting – what we see. Mulvey's original analysis, however, leaves the *female* spectator with no active viewing position except to identify with the male protagonist. In identifying with the women on screen, the female spectator is assumed to align herself with the female-as-object.²⁶ More recent feminist theory rightly inquires how Mulvey's account explains the pleasure which women derive from going to the movies. As Ann Kaplan has asked, is the female spectator's pleasure, like the man's, the pleasure of looking at women, the masochistic pleasure of enjoying objectification, or the sadistic pleasure of identifying with the men who oppress her?²⁷

In "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Mulvey herself proposes, more positively, that identification with the male allows the female spectator to revert, at least imaginatively, to the active independence of what Freud termed the female child's "early masculine period." In this "tomboy" phase, she takes pleasure in a freedom that correct femininity will later repress.²⁸

In moving beyond the static model of active male/passive female, current theories of spectatorship acknowledge women's resistance to the position assigned to them in patriarchal culture. There remains, however, a tendency to speak of *the* female spectator as if all women shared the same aims and aspirations and came to film texts similarly equipped. To make these assumptions overlooks important differences between women of color and white women, rich and poor, women and feminists and different varieties of feminists.

Similarly, feminist theories of spectatorship tend to speak of *the* male spectator as though all men's gazes are male. This assertion assumes, unjustifiably, that all men are equally powerful and that they stand equally to gain from the arrangements of patriarchy. Such assumptions contradict feminism's own insistence on the relationship between power and variables such as economic standing, education, ethnic identity, sexual orientation and so on. Thus, for example, in feminist terms, the male gaze is not only sexist but also heterosexist. Should not then an adequate theory of spectatorship also include an account of how the male gaze operates when the spectator is not heterosexual?

As these objections suggest, a more fine-grained analysis of spectatorship undermines the easy identification of male viewer with "the male gaze." The characterization of the male gaze as "totally active" is, I suggest, difficult to sustain once we move beyond the assumption that all men occupy the same position in a patriarchal social system. Moreover, the assumed activity and control of the male spectator is at odds with the widespread notion that the Hollywood film monolithically encourages a form of passive spectatorship. Equating the male gaze with the active gaze ignores the passive element involved in looking at movies. The male spectator, whatever his real political and social power, cannot interact with the on-screen woman. She appears, but is physically absent.

As I hope to have made clear, the notion of the male gaze cannot simply be identified with the way men see the world. The gaze, properly understood, has undergone certain refinements. It describes a way of seeing the world which is typically male. But it is not a way of seeing confined to men nor is it the province of all men.

Part of what makes feminist theories interesting and powerful is their attention to factors which affect how we see and respond to texts. Gender is one of these factors. As they evolve, feminist film theories, like feminist theories more generally have, however, increasingly recognized the necessity to move beyond a simple binary analysis of gender. In articulating the interconnections between gender and other variables, such as sexual orientation, race, and class, a feminist orientation serves to fine-tune our understanding of art and its effects upon us.

III

What general conclusions can we draw from this analysis of the male gaze? That film works to reinforce societal norms? That it is male? That film, like art generally, may be harmful to women? Such conclusions are now common in film studies. As noted earlier, we find similar arguments in older, more entrenched, fields such as literature and art history. As a body of theory, feminism has succeeded in placing the question of gender at the center of contemporary literary and artistic theory. As I suggested earlier, this

new agenda has unsettling consequences for traditional aesthetics. The new agenda seeks not only to have us surrender certain longstanding assumptions, but to replace them with whole new ways of thinking about art and our relationship to it. I want to conclude therefore by sketching briefly some of these changes and raising several questions for us to consider.

First, feminist theorists ask us to replace the conception of the artwork as an autonomous object – a thing of beauty and a joy forever – with a messier conception of art. Seen in these terms, the artwork moves from an autonomous realm of value to the everyday realm of social and political praxis. It gains a history which overflows the former bounds of "art history." Who makes art and what type of art gets made depend, we learn, on the interaction of the artworld with other worlds.

In drawing our attention to culture in the broadest sense, feminist theorists rely on an alternative, European view of art. In this, feminist aesthetics constitutes part of a larger movement away from "autonomous" aesthetics. Even within Anglo-American aesthetics, the old paradigm no longer holds the place it once did. Our understanding of representation, of the pleasures and powers of art, and of spectatorship have been immeasurably enriched by the expanded context in which we now look at art. Yet, in this enlarged context, how does a concept of the "aesthetic," if by that we mean the *purely* aesthetic, function? Is the discipline of aesthetics possible apart from sociology, cultural studies, identity politics?

Second, feminist theorists propose that we re-examine art's claim to speak for all of us. Does art speak in a gender-neutral voice or does it privilege some experiences and ways of seeing over others? Traditional aesthetics inherits from Aristotle belief in a universal human condition of which art, at least great art, speaks.

Feminist theorists challenge the adequacy of the classic, Aristotelian model not only with respect to the Hollywood film (which some might argue is not great enough to qualify as "great" art), but with respect to all art. The films of Sergei Eisenstein and Jean Renoir, like the plays of Shakespeare, all speak in "particular" voices. On the new view, the artwork, like the generic pronoun, speaks for "mankind," but mankind includes only some of us.²⁹

To question art's autonomy and universality need not imply that these artworks are without value – quite the contrary – although their value may differ from what we once supposed. Nothing in feminist theory precludes ranking Henry James a more important novelist than Jane Austen or Alice Walker a greater writer than John Steinbeck.

In making these evaluative rankings, feminist theorists do insist, however, that we acknowledge the criteria used in defining “important” and “great.” Does “great” mean the forcefully written or the spare, the heartfelt or the coolly reasoned, the typical or the innovative? When is a text forcefully written and who decides? Feminist theorists offer a framework from within which we may – indeed, should – raise such questions. Only when we explicitly acknowledge the criteria used in making these judgements do we create space for competing criteria.

In denying that artworks or the criteria we use to judge them are value-neutral, feminist theorists also urge a third proposal. We are asked to reconsider our relationship to established artistic traditions. The canon, still heralded by some as a reservoir for the best of human thinking, is accused of excluding and silencing women (among other groups). At the very least, a feminist perspective requires that we rethink our relationship to the artistic tradition in terms which do not assume a monolithic “we.” Describing existing artistic traditions as uniformly enlightening and liberating ignores those for whom the authority of those traditions is unquestionably problematic. Thus, we must ask whether the coming of age stories of Holden Caulfield and David Copperfield affect adolescent girls in the same way as adolescent boys, and what significance this difference, if any, makes. Being willing to ask *who* is doing the reading forces us to question whether the pleasures of art are invariant and impervious to factors such as class, race and gender.

Fourthly, feminist theorists alter the characterization of reading or viewing as neutral activities. Like hermeneutics and reader-response theories, they seek to explain how the social and historical placement of the spectator affects the meaning derived from the text. Meaning is no longer determined exclusively by the text. Aside from emphasizing the social and historical

context in which interpretation occurs, feminist theorists break new ground in demonstrating how texts themselves “assume” a particular reader through narrative and stylistic devices. The best of feminist theorizing executes this demonstration through a careful analysis of texts.

In advancing new theories of readership, however, what justifies feminist theorists in assigning “the woman reader” a central place in the analysis of texts? If it is meaningful to think in terms of “the woman reader,” then why not in terms of “the lesbian reader,”³⁰ “the adolescent reader,” “the ideal reader,” “the over-educated reader”? Are all of these categories equally important, and according to what theoretical or political criteria?

Lastly, feminist theorists, like other post-structuralist theorists, endeavor to make the unnoticed noticed. They adopt from the Frankfurt School the belief that the informed spectator is a more critical spectator, and the critical spectator is one less likely to be victimized by the text.

Calls for critical reading are unlikely to meet resistance among aestheticians. But what of claims that art may not be good for us? – At the very least, not all art and not for all of us. In adopting a *politics of art*, feminist theorists confront Anglo-American aesthetics head-on. They replace reverence for art with skepticism. They ask that we be willing to rethink what we value and the reasons we value it.

In suggesting that this challenge deserves serious consideration, I might be understood to claim that all traditional aesthetics is useless, that the accomplishments of the last century are a chimera. This is not my intent. My intent is instead to describe the cognitive dissonance which marks the current situation in aesthetics. If feminism constitutes a new paradigm, then we may wish to ponder how far the old model of aesthetics and the new are commensurable. Is traditional aesthetics contingently or necessarily associated with patriarchy? Can the “gender-neutral” aesthetics of the traditional model be reformed or must it be rejected?

Aside from these theoretical issues, feminist theory raises several practical issues which demand attention. If art contributes to the disequilibrium in power between the sexes, then what should we do? Should we simply quit going to the movies?

Raising such questions returns us to the Socratic tradition which urges caution in the face of art's power. Socrates followed that warning with a call for censorship. With this suggestion, however, many feminists would not agree. Feminist theory confronts the ancient problem of art's potential for harm with two other, far more promising, strategies. Neither appears to have occurred to Socrates. I want therefore to conclude by looking very briefly at these solutions.

IV

The first proposed solution consists in a call for a new type of art. Some feminists, Claire Johnson for example, have proposed the creation of a counter-cinema to compete with the mainstream Hollywood cinema.³¹ This strategy, like establishing public radio and television stations, aims to offer an alternative to the usual fare.

The suggestion to create an alternative art might please Socrates. It would allow him to replace Homer's epics with his own, more philosophically informed, tales. This so-called revision of the canon would meet the Socratic objections to art whose content and form encouraged a weakening of the requisite moral virtues.

Creating new artistic traditions provides an alternative to the passive reception of dominant traditions. This strategy is most often described as creating a female voice or female gaze. It allows women to write their own texts, their own history. Achieving such a "female gaze" requires more than simply providing women with access to the means of film-making. As Diane Waldman correctly argues, women don't make better, less "patriarchal" films simply because they are women, as if women automatically had access to resources not available to the male psyche. The required transformation of film depends not upon some female essence, but upon a consciously adopted political perspective.³²

Adopting such a perspective has resulted in interesting films by Mulvey, Sally Potter, Lizzie Borden, Barbara Hammer and others. These films strive in a variety of ways to disrupt or rework the narrative conventions of the dominant cinema. Sally Potter's *Thriller*, for example, retells the story of *La Bohème*. In Potter's *film noir* version of the doomed love affair, Mimi investi-

gates her own death. Her voice-over and the fragmented narrative through which her story unfolds resist the character identification and narrative closure typical of traditional narrative. Films such as *Thriller* strive to critique the dominant moods of cinematic representation by privileging heterogeneity and multiplicity of meaning. In this, these films aim to free the spectator to engage more actively with the text. Other films, such as those of Barbara Hammer, seek alternatives to the forms of cinematic pleasure provided by the glossy image of the professional photographer. The range and variety of feminist film-making far exceeds what I can survey here. However, these films are shown primarily in film courses and private film societies. Thus, despite their importance in providing an alternative tradition, their influence on mainstream audiences and film-practices is limited.

The second feminist strategy consists in developing methods of dealing with existing texts. This strategy is variously described as re-reading, as reading against the grain, or as "re-vision." It involves active readership, where I mean reading in the broad sense to include both visual and written texts. These strategies have in common the aim of critique and reappropriation. Thus, they do what good criticism always does. But more than this, they involve learning to see through what Kuhn calls a "new pair of spectacles."³³ This new pair of spectacles provides an education not in *what* to think but *how*. Reading against the grain is a strategy designed by out of power groups to counterbalance the dominant textual traditions by offering alternative interpretations of works within those traditions.

Thought of in these terms, feminist theories offer a different critical perspective. They provide a means of resistance, and an alternative to, the male gaze. Admittedly, just as the male gaze involves a distinct political position, so too a feminist perspective is not, nor should it be regarded as, politically neutral.³⁴ Yet, as a way of seeing, it importantly differs from its male counterpart in acknowledging itself *as* a way of seeing.

The possibility of such textual strategies is politically important not only for feminists but for others concerned with "neutralizing" the effects of certain artworks or forms of art within a cultural setting committed to the protection of

free speech. Reading “against the grain” offers an alternative to the passive readership which censorship assumes, and in its paternalism, encourages.

As an interpretative strategy, it opens to all of us – male and female – the possibility of finding our own way through the text. For various historical and cultural reasons, feminist theorists look more optimistically than did Socrates on the capacity of each of us to find that way. Yet, producing new forms of art and reading against the grain of the old will not by themselves topple the existing gender hierarchy. For that, women must also have power off-screen.

Notes

- 1 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 3rd edn, eds Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 803–16.
- 2 E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 297–8.
- 3 Sandra Bartky, “Women, Bodies and Power: A Research Agenda for Philosophy,” *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Feminism* 89 (1989), p. 79.
- 4 Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 23.
- 5 Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocínio P. Schweickart, eds, *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. xix.
- 6 Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 11.
- 7 Patrocínio Schweickart, “Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading,” in *Gender and Reading*, p. 41.
- 8 Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 131.
- 9 Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 146.
- 10 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 134.
- 11 Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).
- 12 B. Deidre Pribam, ed., *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television* (New York: Verso, 1988), p. 1.
- 13 See Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Film of the 1940s* (Indiana University Press, 1987), chapter 2.
- 14 Mary Beth Haralovich, cited in Annette Kuhn, *Women’s Pictures: Feminism and the Cinema* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 34.
- 15 Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988), p. 73.
- 16 E. Ann Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?” in *Women and Values: Readings in Recent Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Marilyn Peargall (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1986), p. 231.
- 17 The idea that women’s oppression depends upon the fulfillment of both of these conditions I owe to a conversation with Tim Gould.
- 18 I base these distinctions on Lydia Goehr’s helpful commentary on an earlier version of this paper. Her comments were presented at the American Society for Aesthetics, Eastern Division Meeting, State College, Pa., 16 March 1990.
- 19 In saying that acts such as rape degrade their victims, I do not mean to endorse the conventional view of women according to which rape is degrading because it destroys or damages a woman’s “purity.” I do, however, want to maintain that there is a sense in which rape (along with slavery and torture) is truly degrading. The notion of degradation is complicated and we are likely to have conflicting intuitions. Many of us would like to uphold the Kantian idea that human dignity is inviolable. In this view, human dignity is such that no act can diminish it. On the other hand, there is the also compelling view that certain acts are such that they do degrade and diminish persons. In this latter view, it is the potential for real degradation that makes the rapist’s acts so horrible.
- 20 Interestingly, what is termed the “new” Hollywood cinema has adopted some of the techniques and self-conscious strategies of the international art cinema.
- 21 This division of feminist film theory into first and second stages can be found, for example, in Lapsley and Westlake, *Film Theory*, p. 25. The same division emerges less explicitly in Claire Johnson, “Women’s Cinema as Counter-Cinema,” in *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols (University of California Press, 1976), pp. 209–15.
- 22 Christian Metz, from *The Imaginary Signifier, Film Theory and Criticism*, 3rd edn, ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 799–801.
- 23 See Modleski’s chapter on *Rear Window* for a discussion of the film’s critical reception.

- 24 Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," p. 810.
- 25 Ibid., p. 811.
- 26 Pribram, *Female Spectators*, pp. 1–2.
- 27 Kaplan, "Is the Gaze Male?" p. 252.
- 28 Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 37.
- 29 For a more detailed analysis of the concepts of art's autonomy and universality, see my "The Philosophical and Political Implications of the Feminist Critique of Aesthetic Autonomy," in *Turning the Century: Feminist Criticism in the 1990s*, Glynis Carr, ed., *The Bucknell Review*, xxxvi (2) (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1992).
- 30 Jean E. Kennard, "Ourself Behind Ourselves: A Theory for Lesbian Readers," in *Gender and Reading*, p. 63.
- 31 Johnson, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema" (work referred to in note 21).
- 32 Diane Waldman, "Film Theory and the Gendered Spectator: The Female or the Feminist Reader?" *Camera Obscura* 18 (1988), p. 81.
- 33 Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, p. 70.
- 34 Ibid.

Feminist Philosophy of Art

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Feminist philosophy of art is not a single particular stance nor does it involve a single methodological commitment. Rather, the category unites a variety of quite different approaches to explaining art and aesthetic experience around the common goal of *ending women's subordination in the arts and discourses about the arts*. Like many other sub-fields in feminist philosophy, feminist philosophy of art is deeply interdisciplinary, drawing from the arts, art criticism, art history, film studies, psychoanalysis, and other sub-fields within feminist philosophy.

As I write this essay in the fall of 2007 there are several recent insightful and informative summaries of feminist philosophy of art already available.¹ There is no need for me to repeat these, particularly since I doubt that I could improve upon them. Instead, what I offer here is a partial, somewhat idiosyncratic and sometimes critical assessment of both the history and the current state of the field.

I begin with some qualifications. First, my general orientation is that of an analytic philosopher, and so while I briefly discuss a few philosophers from the continental tradition, I do not attempt to summarize and categorize their views. That I leave to someone better qualified. Second, this essay focuses on *philosophy of art*, not *aesthetics*, which

is to say that I won't deal with some very interesting issues to do with gender and aesthetic responses to things that are not art (like nature, human bodies and faces, and so forth). Third, within the philosophy of art I limit my focus to the visual arts.² This is not because I think visual art is more important than literature, film, music, or dance, but because feminist philosophy of art was actually spearheaded by movements in art history and the visual arts. I should also note that visual art is my area of expertise. Fourth and finally, I do not attempt to discuss artistic and philosophical movements outside of the European tradition, although I strongly suspect that many of the issues raised in feminist philosophy of art would benefit from the challenges that a careful and informed consideration of such traditions would offer. I, however, am woefully unqualified to offer such a critique and firmly believe that those trained in the European tradition do more harm than good when we attempt to cover other traditions without proper training and background.

With these qualifications out in the open, let us begin.

Situatedness

All of the different philosophical approaches to ending women's subordination in the arts and in discourses about the arts take as their point of

A.W. Eaton, "Feminist Philosophy of Art" in *Philosophy Compass* 3(5), 2008, pp. 873–893.
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departure the fact of *situatedness*. The basic idea is that both art's producers (the artists) and its audiences (those who appreciate, judge, study, critique, evaluate, buy and sell, and theorize about art) represent, experience, and value the world in ways that reflect their particular social situations.³ There are many dimensions of a given subject's situation or social location (these terms are typically used interchangeably) but one especially relevant to the project of ending women's subordination in the arts and discourses about the arts is *gender*: the different roles, norms, and meanings that societies assign based on the (real or imagined) anatomical characteristics of the different sexes. On the basis of anatomical differences, women and men are expected to and do in fact adopt different social roles, are excluded from or admitted to different spaces, comply with different norms of conduct, acquire and practice different skills, and aspire to different virtues and character traits, to name only a few of the contexts where gender differences are especially salient.⁴

In addition to gender, some feminists focus on *sex* as a significant dimension of one's social location. *Sex* is usually distinguished from *gender* in that the former refers to the anatomical distinction between females and males based on locally salient sexual and reproductive traits, whereas *gender*, as noted above, is what society makes of this distinction.⁵ Since both the production and reception of art are quite often somatic,⁶ it is reasonable to expect our location in sexually differentiated bodies to be a salient dimension of situatedness for feminist philosophy of art. To my mind, the deepest questions in feminist philosophy of art pertain to *sex* rather than *gender*, as I'll explain shortly.

It is important to note that feminism's issue is not simply that people are situated *differently* on the basis of sex and gender. The problem is that we are *all systematically* situated in a *hierarchically* structured world where men have privileges just because they are men and women are disadvantaged in many contexts just because they are women. This is to say that gender and sex are hierarchical modes of social location according to which everyone, including art's producers and audiences, are situated. On this point all feminist philosophers agree. The question is, *What do we make of situatedness?* What difference, if any, does

situatedness make to the production or reception of art? What difference, if any, *should* it make? As I see it, these questions set the agenda for any feminist intervention in the philosophy of art, although there is little agreement about how to do this. In order to lay bare some of the complexities involved, I elaborate on the central questions and tease out the relevant variables. I offer this as a mapping of the conceptual space as I see it rather than as an accurate reflection of the issues that actually arise in the literature. This is to say that some of these questions have not yet received the philosophical attention they deserve.

- (1) Do sex or gender *systematically* inform, shape, limit or otherwise influence any of the following: artistic practice, aesthetic experience or aesthetic judgment, taste and its standards and criteria, or art criticism? If so, what shape does this influence take?
 - (a) **Production:** Do women and men systematically produce different kinds of art? Does each sex or gender have systematically unique artistic styles or methods, or do they systematically choose different subject matter or use different materials? Does one group on the whole produce more art than the other?
 - (b) **Reception:** Do women and men have different modes of appreciating, understanding, or valuing art? Do they have different standards of taste or conceptions of art? Is one group more interested in art in general or arts of specific sorts than another?
 - (c) If such influence exists, what is its extent? Do sex or gender have strong or weak influences on art's production or reception?
 - (d) If there are differences between the sexes or the genders with respect to the production or reception of art, how fixed are they? Can women take up androcentric artistic perspectives? Can men take up gynocentric ones? If not, what are the barriers to such crossing?
- (2) Do the dominant frameworks in the philosophy of art – e.g., theories of art, standards of taste, conceptions of artistic practice – reflect an androcentric perspective?⁷ If so, what

form does this bias take? What would gynocentric frameworks look like? Is sex-neutrality in the philosophy of art possible?

- (3) *Should sex or gender influence any of the following: artistic practice, aesthetic experience or aesthetic judgment, taste and its standards and criteria, or art criticism?*
 - (a) If it is a fact that women's artistic production or aesthetic experience is distinctive, is this distinctness merely one of the unfortunate symptoms of persistent and pervasive subordination? If so, then are sex or gender differences in the production and reception of art things to overcome? Should the eventual elimination of sexed artistic perspectives be feminism's goal?
 - (b) Or are women artistically privileged in some crucial respects? If so, in what does this privilege consist and what are its conditions? Do the particular social relations into which women enter or the particular kind of work that women do underwrite certain artistic virtues? Does critical consciousness about sex oppression yield particular artistic merits or aesthetic sensitivities?
- (4) If the philosophical tradition has been biased by androcentric perspectives, what should we do about this? Should we strive to purge the dominant tradition of its androcentric bias, and where this proves impossible, to construct new sex-neutral theories? Or do we need entirely new gynocentric theories to counterbalance the philosophical tradition? If so, what should the status of these new theories be? Would they be complements or rivals to the dominant tradition?
 - (a) If we should be developing gynocentric theories of art, do we need a separate theory for every social position that feminism sees as relevant? This question is especially pressing given third wave feminism's insistence that one cannot properly understand sex oppression without simultaneously attending to the struggles of other disenfranchised groups.⁸ Do we then need distinct theories of art that speak to the multitude of intersecting forms of oppression; e.g., a distinct theory for

middle-class lesbian Latinas, for bisexual working-class white women, for transgendered African-Americans? If so, then how do we keep this process from continually splintering into countless irreconcilable fragments? Or is this a result that we must live with?

These questions deserve comment.

First, I should emphasize that many of these questions – in particular, those that fall under (1) and (2) – are *empirical*; the answers to them should come from art history, psychology and cognitive science, and from the history of philosophy. This is not to say that we philosophers can simply ignore these questions, because the normative issues depend upon answering them. Nor do I mean to suggest that the first two sets of questions will be somehow easier to answer; on the contrary, I think that answering them will be enormously complicated, particularly since this will require employing scientific and historical methods that are themselves sensitive to feminist concerns. I emphasize this point because I think that we feminists tend to make the mistake of either assuming positions about whether sex affects the production or reception of art based on prior philosophical commitments rather than on the evidence, or the mistake of treating these questions as philosophical ones that can be answered solely through reasoned argumentation.

Second, although I frame many of these questions in terms of *sex* and *gender*, I think that for the most part it is at the level of *sex* that the questions, especially the empirical ones, get a real grip. After all, given that women have historically done different kinds of work, entered into different kinds of social relations, and had far fewer educational opportunities (including those pertaining to artistic training), to name only a few pertinent aspects of social differentiation, it would be extremely surprising if *gender* had not had an appreciable affect on artistic production, and perhaps also on its appreciation. Of course there is the difficult task of explaining just how gender has made a difference, but the deeper question, I think, is whether social differentiation is entirely responsible for the differences.

Feminist philosophers of art, with a few exceptions, tend to avoid questions about *sex* because these are taken to be essentialist. (I address this in

more detail below.) I consider this a mistake for several reasons. First, as noted above, whether sex makes a difference to artistic production and appreciation is an empirical question to which we ought not simply exclude answers on the basis of prior philosophical commitments (in this case, anti-essentialism). But, second, to think that sex makes a difference does not necessarily make one an essentialist because *sex* need not be understood as a set of inherent and immutable physical traits. As discussed below, *sex* might instead be understood in terms of the phenomenological experience of anatomical difference, where this is understood to be shaped by social norms. This conception of *sex* makes the sex/gender distinction less crisp, but this is as it should be.⁹

These, as I see it, are the central issues that feminist philosophy must confront. Now let us look at the field's actual development to see how and to what extent these issues are addressed.

The Problem of Canon Formation

As artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s started to produce explicitly feminist works, critics and historians of the various arts began to examine a previously unnoticed gender bias in the Western artistic canon (where 'canon' refers to those works traditionally deemed artistically excellent that form the core of a given discipline).¹⁰ This bias is manifested on two levels.

First, feminist critics brought to light the fact that canonical artworks systematically represent women and men according to deeply entrenched stereotypes, a difference evident in the organization and scenarios of the works themselves. As art historian John Berger famously put it in 1972, 'men act and women appear' (47). Whereas men are typically portrayed as strong, active, heroic, and playing important historical roles, women are nearly always shown as weak, inert, and vulnerable; in domestic or nurturing roles; identified with nature; and as sexually available for men's needs. This is most evident in the visual arts where representations of passive, anonymous, vulnerable female nudes dominate many historical periods.¹¹ Drawing upon semiotics, psychoanalysis, and Marxist theory, feminists sought to expose and analyze the ways that an androcentric perspective has shaped structural features of traditionally admired artworks.

One of the most influential concepts developed in this early period of criticism is the notion of 'the male gaze'. The term was first used by Laura Mulvey to discuss film, but soon widely adopted by critics and historians of the (static) visual arts. 'The male gaze' refers to the androcentric attitude of an image; that is, its depiction of the world, and in particular of women, in terms of male or masculine interests, emotions, attitudes, or values. More specifically, 'the male gaze' usually refers to the sexually objectifying attitude that a representation takes toward its feminine subject matter, presenting her as a primarily passive object for heterosexual-male erotic gratification. (It is rarely observed but worth noting that 'the male gaze' is really a *heterosexual* male gaze, never a gay male gaze.) It is a common mistake to understand this as an empirical description of individuals' actual viewing practices.¹² A picture need not ever be viewed by heterosexual men in order to exemplify 'the male gaze' because the term refers to the *viewpoint* or *attitude* that a picture adopts and the response that it prescribes to its audience – male and female, heterosexual and homosexual – namely a sexually objectifying attitude toward the woman (or women) depicted.¹³ This is not to say that the male gaze cannot be resisted – indeed, there has been some compelling feminist work on withstanding the male gaze;¹⁴ the point is that in such cases the image in question is making demands (that is, the demand to see in a certain way) that the audience opposes. One project that feminist philosophy of art has not yet taken up is to lay the theoretical groundwork for the concept of 'the male gaze'. In particular it would be fruitful to explore what it means for an image to 'make demands' or 'prescribe responses' without covertly relying on authorial intention.¹⁵

The second level at which feminists discern bias pertains to the canon's gender makeup. Feminists argue that fully addressing sex inequality in the arts requires, among other things, questioning the canon for two reasons. First, although women make up roughly half of the population, they are almost entirely absent from the pantheon of great artists. Second, the *kinds* of artifacts traditionally produced by women – e.g., quilts, pottery, needlework, and weaving – have not been taken seriously as art but rather have been relegated to the diminished categories of 'decorative

arts' or 'crafts'. (I shall refer to this kind as *women's artifacts* for brevity's sake.)

To recap: Feminists draw out attention to three sorts of bias: (1) pervasive gender stereotypes and androcentric perspectives dominating canonical works; (2) an almost complete absence of women from the pantheon of great artists; and (3), a near total exclusion of women's artifacts from the canon. Taken together, these three things strongly suggest that sex or gender – it is at this point unclear which – has indeed made a difference to artistic production and its appreciation.¹⁶ One easy explanation is that females are simply incapable of true artistic greatness. All feminists reject this explanation, and not simply on ideological grounds. The fact is that the world in which art is created and appreciated has always been one in which women are systematically disadvantaged in most aspects of life. The coincidence of this persistent and pervasive sex inequality with sex bias in the canon suggests that the canon is shaped by more than purely aesthetic concerns.

But mere correlation does not prove causation. What, exactly, is the relationship between social and political inequality and women's lack of representation in the artistic canon? What explains the paucity of great women artists and the prevailing hierarchies that undervalue artifacts customarily produced by women?

Two Explanations

There are two general approaches to the canon-formation problem which, following Iris Marion Young, I call *humanism* and *gynocentrism*.¹⁷ These two positions, which mirror the two major approaches to oppression in feminist philosophy and politics generally, differ on the questions of exactly how, if at all, sex and gender matter – and, as we shall see later, how they *should* matter – to the production, appreciation, and evaluation of art.

Humanism

Humanism in feminist philosophy of art holds that although gender has made a difference in the production and reception of art, *sex* does not in principle make any difference. Females have the

same capacity to produce great art as males and, in the absence of patriarchy, female artists would not be any different from their male counterparts. This is to say that certain kinds of artifacts would not be the special province of one sex or the other nor would one sex produce more artistically valuable works than another. What gives the *appearance* of an intrinsic difference between female and male artists, and in particular what makes female artists appear deficient, is the patriarchal system in which art is produced and appreciated. But how, exactly, has patriarchy had this effect? Humanist feminists offer two sorts of answer.

Some explain the exclusion of women artists and the sorts of artifacts typically produced by women from the canon by appeal to biases in the prevailing tastes and standards of artistic excellence.¹⁸ Since the makers of taste have predominately been men, and since until very recently there has been almost no attention to gender inequality in the art world, choices regarding what counts as 'great art', or even as 'art' at all, have been distorted by preferences and values for things masculine. These biases have taken many forms: for instance, a preference for works that express heterosexual male experiences and desires, or a prejudice against things made by women simply because they were made by women, or a prejudice against certain materials because of their deep association with domestic affairs. Removing these biases and implementing equitable standards of artistic value should allow for the incorporation of women artists and women's artifacts into the canon of great art, a topic discussed later in this essay.

This explanation of women's exclusion from the canon has met with some skepticism for it seems that no matter how unbiased the standards for artistic greatness, and no matter how many worthy but underappreciated artists or art forms one uncovers, the (re)discovery of 'women worthies' will never yield quilts that rival, say, the Sistine ceiling, nor will it uncover female equals of Leonardo or Picasso.¹⁹ It's not simply that the (re)discovery project will not work; some worry that any attempt to recover underappreciated art forms and artists may reinforce the point that all feminists reject, namely that females are intrinsically incapable of artistic greatness.

For this reason some humanist feminists take a more historical and materialist approach to

explaining women's exclusion from the canon. According to this approach, the problem is not so much biased standards of artistic excellence as it is the paucity of women artists. There simply have not been many great women artists, a fact explained by women's exclusion from participation in key artistic spheres.

Such an argument was famously expounded by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and later carried to the context of visual art by Linda Nochlin. Both Woolf and Nochlin described how social, economic, and institutional barriers have prevented women from making art. Woolf argued that to be a successful writer, a woman needed space of her own in which to work and enough money to support herself. Women's relative economic, material, and social disadvantages throughout history has meant that very few women have had the opportunity to properly cultivate their literary talents. But if women had not been so disadvantaged, we would have seen female equivalents of Shakespeare. Nochlin shows that in much of Europe in the nineteenth century, women were not allowed to attend life-drawing classes and so lacked the training and practice necessary to adequately represent the human form, which was the dominant artistic subject at the time. Both Woolf and Nochlin exemplify humanist feminism in that they understand this aspect of women's oppression – that is, women's exclusion from the artistic canon – as the distortion and inhibition of our artistic potential by a society that over-values and cultivates men's artistic development. Were women to receive the training and resources necessary to produce great art, we should expect to see qualitative parity in artistic production.

Although economic and social disadvantages and lack of opportunity surely contributed to the canon's one-sided configuration, the historical explanation cannot fully account for three things. First, despite adverse conditions, some women have been making oil painting, sculpture, and the like for centuries, yet none number among the pantheon of great artists. Second, if women today experience impediments to full participation in creative spheres, these impediments are negligible compared with the past, yet women still very rarely number among the artists considered important in the contemporary art world.²⁰ Third, the historical explanation has trouble accounting

for the exclusion of *kinds* of artifacts conventionally produced by women. Women have had almost exclusive access to so-called 'craft' production for centuries and yet this creative output is not accorded the status and respect of men's artifactual production. Such objections return us to a focus on biases in the prevailing standards of artistic excellence.

It is worth noting that although humanist feminists tend to talk as if these two approaches to explaining gender bias in the canon are mutually exclusive, there is no reason why this should be so. I think it likely that both factors – that is, both gender biases in artistic standards *and* economic and social barriers to artistic productivity – have contributed to the omission of women and women's artifacts from the canon of great art.

Gynocentrism

Gynocentrism in the philosophy of art holds that sex *does* make an essential difference to the production of art. Although there are different views about just what form this difference takes, there is general agreement among gynocentric feminists that the differences one sees between women's and men's artistic production are not merely the effects of male-dominated institutions. Rather, at least some of such differences are the manifestations of particularly sexed forms of bodily experience or artistic sensibility.²¹

It follows, gynocentrists contend, that in order to appreciate, evaluate, and understand women's artistic efforts, one cannot appeal to the same standards employed in judging men's artistic production since there is no common measure that applies to both. Instead, women's artistic production should be evaluated and appreciated according to its own criteria of excellence.²²

This fundamental shift away from humanism results in a more radical critique of the artistic canon. Neither biased standards nor impediments to art-making are responsible for women's exclusion from the artistic canon: rather, the culprit is the devaluation and repression of women's experience and material production by a masculinist culture. The remedy is a celebration of women's experience and material production. We'll see just what this entails shortly.

Although it is the more radical of the two approaches to explaining women's exclusion from

the artistic canon, many feminists are skeptical of gynocentrism for various reasons. First, some argue that the claim of the existence of a uniquely female style – one that differs in terms of its material, content, expressive qualities, or formal properties – is simply false. An examination of the scant history of women artists reveals that they have more in common with the other male artists of their time and place than they do with women artists from more distant times and places.²³

Second, some feminists worry that gynocentrism rests on an overly general notion of ‘the female’ or ‘the feminine’ that overlooks important – and artistically relevant – differences between women such as ethnicity, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and age, to name only a few (e.g., Felski).²⁴

Third, it is often charged, usually by other feminists, that those who focus on sex as a significant dimension of situatedness are essentialist.²⁵ This, I think, usually rests on the assumption that our anatomical sexual and reproductive features can only be understood as a group of immutable and inherent properties that unite all women. But this is a mistake.²⁶

Following the pioneering word of Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, there has developed within feminism much more subtle and complex understandings of sexual difference that focuses on the phenomenology of embodiment. The basic idea is that physical body develops and is experienced in a sociocultural context that is pervasively structured by gender hierarchy. This means, these feminists argue, that anatomical features of the body are deeply informed by the norms and meanings that we attach to the different sexes. One example is how rules of menstrual etiquette (that is, norms that oblige women to conceal their menstruation) and stereotypes that associate menstruation with moodiness profoundly shape women’s experience of their own menstruation and of their bodies generally.²⁷

There is considerably more to say about this phenomenological strain in feminism, but for our purposes the thing to note is that when it is understood as the phenomenological experience of anatomical difference as shaped by social norms, *sex* is not an essentialist concept but, rather, picks out one significant dimension of *social* location. And given that art is typically made with and appreciated through the body, not

to mention that the body has been *the* favorite subject matter of the visual arts throughout history, it is quite reasonable to expect sex, understood in this way, to make a difference to the appreciation and production of art.²⁸

Confronting the Philosophical Tradition

Challenges from both the gynocentric and humanist perspectives have prompted the need to examine traditional understandings of art and to scrutinize the philosophical canon itself. With this task in mind, much work in feminist aesthetics has been devoted to critically analyzing established theories of art, artistic talent, and aesthetic experience and value.

In their critical examination of the Western philosophical tradition, feminists uncover and analyze previously unnoticed gender biases in theories of art from Plato onward. Here are a few key examples. Some contend that central aesthetic concepts such as ‘genius’ and ‘masterpiece’ have been traditionally gendered male and that this makes a difference not only to how women’s artistic efforts are understood but also to how women artists are treated.²⁹ Similarly, several argue that the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime has been construed by Burke, Kant, Schiller, and others in strongly gendered terms that reinforce negative stereotypes about women.³⁰ Others argue that influential theories of aesthetic perception implicitly take men’s experience as their model by favoring sight and hearing, which customarily play a prominent role in men’s lives, and by underestimating the aesthetic importance of those senses integral to the social roles assigned to women, namely touch, smell, and taste.³¹ Finally, many feminist philosophers are critical of a cluster of theories and concepts that assume or attempt to justify the autonomy of art and of aesthetic appreciation and evaluation (see Devereaux for an overview). Some maintain, for example, that the common insistence upon art’s segregation from practical concerns results in the art/craft distinction and hence in the systematic depreciation of the sorts of artifacts customarily produced by women. Others make the case that the related doctrine of aesthetic formalism, which restricts artistic value to a work’s formal features, departs in practice from purely

formal concerns by reflecting masculine preferences for particular themes (such as the female nude). In these ways, feminists argue that the presumed disinterestedness and universality of aesthetic judgment in theories following Kant mask standards of evaluation that are partial to men's experience, preferences and sensibilities.³²

The question is, what do we do once these biases have been unmasked?

Overcoming Biases

Once the many sources of women's subordination in the arts and discourses about the arts have been uncovered and analyzed, feminist artists, art historians, critics, and philosophers aim to delineate the means to overcome it. In addition to providing women with equal opportunities in the art world – something that has still not yet been achieved³³ – the prevailing conceptions of art and artistic production (including talent), theories of aesthetic experience and judgment, and the prevailing standards of taste and of artistic excellence must be revised.

Perspectivism

For many feminist aestheticians, the fact of situatedness means that taste is always conditioned – some say *distorted*³⁴ – by the particular social and historical circumstances in which it is formed. 'The general consensus', Peg Brand notes, 'is that there is no disinterested gazer of visual images, only one whose gaze is saturated with interest' ('Disinterestedness' 160). Several things are taken to follow. First, it is impossible that taste can be disinterested; that is, free from the influence of the particularities of one's constitution and situation, and without regard for one's personal preferences, inclinations, peculiarities, tolerances, or orientations. Second, there are no standards of aesthetic excellence that hold for all people across the ages and regardless of factors such as gender, race, nationality, religion, etc. Moreover, the very ideals of disinterestedness and universal standards, among others, are seen as part of the 'dominant aesthetic ideology that feminism seeks to overturn'.³⁵

Dismantling the dominant aesthetic ideology is seen by many to require the outright abandon-

ment of the problematic concepts, methods, and categorizations: this can include not just the ideals of disinterestedness and universality but also neighboring notions like aesthetic autonomy, formalism, the art/craft distinction, and even at times the very notions of 'aesthetic value' and 'great art'.³⁶ In their place, these feminists embrace a perspectivism based on a pluralistic conception of art and artistic value.³⁷ 'Universalist ideals have been replaced by the value of the particular perspective mindful of its situation in society and history, without pretense to universality', writes Korsmeyer (*Gender and Aesthetics* 56). A similar eschewal of all pretension to universal standards of aesthetic excellence has led some art historians and critics to reject the notion of artistic canons altogether and to replace talk of 'art' with that of visual or material culture (e.g., Pollock).

I have several worries about this approach. First, the charge against neutrality, universality, objectivity, and the like seems to rest on an error, namely mistaking the androcentric origins and prejudicial application of concepts and norms for flaws of the concepts and norms themselves. But the fact that, for instance, the 'universal voice' of aesthetic judgment has traditionally been biased toward masculine interests does not mean that the very ideals of universality, impartiality, objectivity, or neutrality are inherently masculinist. I have seen no convincing argument to the contrary, and the fact that feminism has often relied on *humanism* – which relies on the idea of universal human capacities³⁸ – belies it.

Second, this approach capitulates to relativism and undercuts any normative claim to artistic *value* or to authority on the part of aesthetic judges whatsoever. This result is particularly unwelcome given the efforts to demonstrate the artistic *merit* of women's artifactual production. It is common nowadays for feminists to refuse to speak of some works being better than others or, when they do use evaluative language, to enclose the value terms in scare quotes. I think that this is wrongheaded and self-defeating, for one thing because it undermines the initial feminist project which was to show that women have, or are at least capable of, producing works that are *good*: perhaps *as good* as those of men, perhaps *better* than those of men, but definitely *good* and not merely 'good' in scare quotes.

A third and related problem is that, as noted above, feminism in the arts began by exposing androcentric and sexist biases in the artistic canon. But if *all* judgments of taste are equally distorted by gender and other aspects of social position, as these feminists hold, then what was the point of exposing these?³⁹ The point was not simply to expose an instance of bad faith – that partial and interested judgments were masquerading under the banner of neutrality. The point was to expose these as *biases* – prejudicial distortions of judgment – and not simply a few of the myriad ways that social position inflects taste. As I see it, we have two options: either we retain an ideal of neutrality as a standard against which to measure biases,⁴⁰ or, if we continue to insist that all judgment pertaining to art is distorted (as Korsmeyer and others insist), we find a way to distinguish between good and bad biases.⁴¹ (It is worth noting that this is not a new project. These are among the central tasks that Hume and other Scottish Enlightenment philosophers undertake, although not, of course, with respect to gender concerns.)

Revisionism

Some feminists do in fact warn against the assumption that the entire philosophy of art has been tainted by gender bias (Felski, 'Feminism: Critique') and point to recent developments in the field, such as the critique of a disinterested aesthetic attitude, that are continuous with feminism's aims (Silvers). Others argue that we need to embrace some aspects of discredited ideals [such] as artistic autonomy because they are actually useful for feminism's goals (Devereaux; Brand, 'Disinterestedness'). These developments suggest that feminism might *not* require a conceptual transformation in the philosophy of art. Instead we should work to develop versions of the discredited concepts and norms – e.g., neutrality, genius, taste – that acknowledge the fact of situatedness but are nevertheless normative, not relativistic, and purged of androcentric and sexist biases. This, as I see it, is the most pressing project facing the feminist philosophy of art. Since similar problems have been the topic of feminist epistemology and value theory for some time, feminist philosophy of art would greatly benefit from sustained and extensive engagement with these neighboring fields.

In practical terms, a revisionist approach would mean two things: (1) integrating women's artistic efforts into the canon, and (2) re-evaluating those canonical works marked by androcentrism and sexism. Whereas (1), which Cynthia Freeland has called the 'Add women and Stir' approach, is well under way,⁴² few attempt to undertake (2), that is, to call into question the canonical status of so many works whose prized status appears to at least partially depend on their sexism and androcentrism.⁴³ This is another place where we feminist philosophers, in conjunction with art historians and critics, need to focus our efforts.

Gynocentrism

Gynocentric feminists insist that incorporating women into the canon misses what is distinctive about their art. Likewise, traditional theories of art cannot be adequately modified to capture the uniqueness of women's experience, preferences, values, sensibilities, and modes of expression. What is needed, then, is not a reformation of the current artistic canon, as the revisionists maintain, since attempting to integrate women's art into the current canon is bound to do their art a disservice by holding it to inappropriate male standards. Instead, gynocentric feminists call for a separate canon that employs uniquely feminine criteria based on a variety of alternative aesthetic concepts and theories of art (Battersby; Frueh; Robinson; contributions by Barwell, Donovan, French, and Lorraine in Hein and Korsmeyer).

As we have seen, some feminists are skeptical of the existence of a uniquely feminine or female artistic style or are worried that gynocentrism's notion of the feminine is overly general. In addition to these concerns, some rightly worry that separate principles and criteria of artistic excellence and aesthetic experience risk leaving the canon with its biases intact while ghettoizing women's art (e.g., Nochlin; Pollock). A fourth and related point is that a separate canon leaves traditional concepts and standards in place while delineating women as a special case; artists, like most other prestigious roles in our society, are assumed to be male unless otherwise specified. These last two worries seem justified by cases like the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC⁴⁴ where works by women are

isolated from the considerably more prestigious collections of the National Gallery and the Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. When one visits the nation's capital, one goes to 'the' art museums and then, if there is time left over, one might visit the *women's* art museum.

The Future of Feminist Aesthetics

This section will be a mixture of thoughts about where feminist philosophy of art *is* going and thoughts about where it *should be* going.

I began by noting that feminist philosophy of art comprises a variety of philosophical commitments and methodologies that are united around the goal of ending women's subordination in the arts and discourses about the arts. The philosophy of art has not yet adequately responded to this moral imperative set by feminism, which is to say that our work is not yet completed.

But where exactly do we go from here? Throughout this essay I have suggested problems and topics that I think we should pursue, but my own view is that most important of these are the basic questions that I outlined at the start of this essay. For instance, Does sex systematically shape artistic practice or aesthetic experience? If so, how exactly? As I have explained, this sort of question is typically – and mistakenly – condemned as essentialist. I have argued that such questions need not be framed in essentialist terms, and further, that we need to know the answer to these basic questions in order to adequately address the normative issues of interest to so many feminists. (For instance, if there are no such significant differences then gynocentrism's descriptive and normative position is substantially weakened.) We do not yet have anything like definitive answers to the basic empirical questions, and so this is one place where we should focus our attention. As I see it, this means that feminist philosophy of art must begin serious engagement with the empirical disciplines – like psychology and cognitive science – whose business it is to answer such questions.

Although the debate about how to deal with gender bias in artworks, canon formation and traditional theories of art is lively and ongoing, these concerns no longer dominate feminist philosophy of art as they once did. As philosophers

have developed and elaborated various positions on these matters, the field has started to move in less reactive and more positive directions.

For instance, many have turned to realms that have not previously received philosophical attention, especially to matters pertaining to the body, a set of topics that until very recently had been dismissed as base and unworthy of philosophical attention. What makes this a particularly *feminist* intervention into aesthetics is that 'the body' and a host of related concepts have been traditionally gendered female; that is, associated with and taken to pertain most centrally to females.⁴⁵ What feminists have done is to take traditional aesthetic concepts and methods, often with some modification, or develop new aesthetic concepts and methods, to interpret and explain bodily phenomena such as eating disorders (Lintott), body beautification (Cahill), and fashion (Hanson, 'Dressing Down Dressing Up'; 'Fashion and Philosophy'). A related position takes seriously food, gustatory pleasure and the sense of taste (of the sort associated with the tongue and olfactory organs) as matters for aesthetic concern (Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics* ch. 4, 'Deep Gender'; 'Perceptions, Pleasures, Arts'; *Making Sense of Taste*). Others call for a revaluation of aspects of the female body that have traditionally inspired disgust, such as the vagina and menstrual blood (Frueh, 'Vaginal Aesthetics').

Another rich terrain for feminist aesthetics is the philosophical issues arising from the works of artists concerned with gender. One example is a new focus on artworks that represent the female body in ways that challenge the traditionally narrow standards of female beauty (see, for instance, Meagher's essay on the work of Jenny Saville in Brand and Devereaux). Another area pertains to artworks that blatantly promote a feminist agenda, thereby calling into question traditional distinctions between aesthetics and politics or art and activism (see, for example, Mullin's essay in Brand and Devereaux). The latter is not limited to contemporary artists (see Garrard's account of Leonardo's valorization of the feminine in Brand and Korsmeyer) nor to art with a feminist program (e.g., Eaton).

Aesthetics is often slow to respond to ideas, problems, and methods that are current in related fields and other areas of philosophy. This is also true of feminist philosophy of art which has taken

its time in recognizing what is often called the *intersectionality critique*: basically, the idea that one cannot divorce feminist struggles from those of other disenfranchised groups.⁴⁶ We have also been slow to address the important work on art, aesthetics, and race by theoreticians outside of the discipline of philosophy (e.g., hooks, *Black Looks*; *Art on My Mind*; *Reel to Real*; Wallace; Piper, who is herself a philosopher and an artist!). Recently, however, philosophers of art have started to address philosophical issues to do with the intersection of race, gender and aesthetics and art (e.g., Hobson in Brand and Devereaux; Roelofs, 'Racialization'; 'Culture'), a trend that promises to reshape the field.

Notes

- 1 See: entries by Silvers, Brand, Felski, and Brodsky under 'Feminism' in Michael Kelly's *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*; Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*; 'Feminist Aesthetics'; Hanson, 'Feminist Aesthetics'. Also see Joshua Shaw's 'Annotated Bibliography of Writings in Feminism and Aesthetics' in Brand and Devereaux 258–72.
- 2 The term 'visual arts' standardly refers to drawing, the graphic arts, painting, photography, sculpture, video art, and mixed media works. The term typically excludes film and architecture.
- 3 The emphasis on situatedness is by no means peculiar to feminist aesthetics. It is also the starting point for feminist epistemology and philosophy of science (see Anderson for an overview).
- 4 The many dimensions of gender are carefully, clearly, and convincingly enumerated in Halsanger.
- 5 This perspicuous way of putting the sex/gender distinction comes from Anderson 4.
- 6 I mean that art most always is produced by using the body and involves the maker's tactile and visual senses. In addition, art often represents the human body. Finally, the perception and appreciation of (visual) art happens through the visual and tactile senses and often produces sensual, bodily pleasures.
- 7 Following Anderson (7), I define *andocentric perspective* as one that views the world primarily in relation to male or masculine interests, emotions, attitudes, or values.
- 8 This is sometimes called 'the intersectionality critique'. Grillo provides a clear introduction to the concept.
- 9 For a trenchant argument to this effect, see Iris Young's 'Lived Body vs. Gender: Reflections on Social Structure and Subjectivity' in Young, *On Female Body Experience*.
- 10 Feminist intervention in the arts began with what is known as feminism's second wave. Whereas the first wave of feminism in the 19th and early 20th centuries focused on legal and other officially mandated inequalities (like suffrage), second wave feminists in the 1960s gave equal attention to unofficial inequalities that were manifest in normal everyday practices.
- 11 For an overview, see Nead.
- 12 For instance, Karen Hanson suggests that the concept of the male gaze would be discredited if either it turned out that this was an overly simplistic way of understanding how men actually see women, or if 'in the real world' this particular way of seeing women were to become obsolete. She continues: 'If women do not always and everywhere, at every age, in every era, see themselves as seen, how can we predict with assurance a given woman's patterns of pleasure at the sight of a film?' ('Feminist Aesthetics' 565). But this misses the point that 'the male gaze' is not an empirical concept and does not predict viewers' ways of looking at and interpreting images (whether moving or static). Rather, 'the male gaze' refers to the kind of response – as Berger puts it, a way of seeing – that some pictures *prescribe* to their viewers. The fact that this prescription can be resisted or ignored – because the viewer is, for instance, a gay man or a feminist – does not negate the fact that the male gaze is a structural feature of the pictures in question.
- 13 Devereaux (in Brand and Korsmeyer) and Korsmeyer (*Gender and Aesthetics* 54) both understand 'the male gaze' to refer to something like an ideal viewing position prescribed by images, rather than an empirical description of actual viewing practices. For a brief but excellent discussion of Mulvey and the controversies surrounding her work, see Freeland, 'Film Theory'.
- 14 See, for instance: bell hooks, 'The Oppositional Gaze', in hooks, *Black Looks*; Devereaux, 'Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers, and the Gendered Spectator', in Brand and Korsmeyer.
- 15 Those feminist aestheticians who get it right that 'the male gaze' denotes an ideal viewing position rather than actual audiences' viewing practices tend to rely on artist's intention to explain this phenomenon. Korsmeyer, for instance, finishes her discussion of the male gaze thus: 'While many women obviously also appreciate art, the stance they assume in order to appreciate works in the ways they were *intended* requires the donning of a masculine perceptual attitude' (*Gender and Aesthetics* 11, my emphasis). But the notion of artistic intention is so highly contested in both the

philosophy of art and other disciplines like art history that this requires more scrutiny and refinement. I mean to mark it here as one fruitful area for feminist philosophers of art to explore.

- 16 To be clear, the suggestion that sex or gender affects art appreciation and criticism comes from the fact that the makeweights in the art world, to borrow a term from Danto, have traditionally been male.
- 17 See Young, 'Humanism'. Klinger also employs these categories ('Aesthetics' 347). In her excellent overview of feminist aesthetics and philosophy of art, Anita Silvers uses terms 'gynesis' and 'gender theory' to describe similar positions.
- 18 Proponents of this view include Parker and Pollock; The Guerrilla Girls, *Confessions; Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion*.
- 19 Linda Nochlin puts this point strongly.
- 20 The artist-activist group The Guerrilla Girls has done an excellent job of tracking the exclusion of women artists from the contemporary canon. See The Guerrilla Girls *Confessions; Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion*; also their Web site <<http://www.guerrillagirls.com/>>.
- 21 Frueh, for instance, argues for a female artistic sensibility that emphasizes visceral responses to materials, feelings over intellect, and repetitive imagery.
- 22 The most developed version of this view is Battersby.
- 23 Nochlin was the first to make this point. Felski ('Why Feminism Doesn't Need an Aesthetic' 434) makes a similar point with respect to the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington DC.
- 24 This critique is often mistakenly conflated with a critique of essentialism. The point that gynocentrism relies on identifying some elements common to all women's artistic production and this overlooks important – and artistically relevant – differences between women artists is conceptually distinct from worries about essentialism.
- 25 So, for instance, in their introduction to *Hypatia's* special issue on 'Women, Art, and Aesthetics' in 2003 where they briefly summarize the state of the field, Peg Brand and Mary Devereaux write: 'many contemporary feminists now reject the idea of a uniquely feminine aesthetic and the essentialist thinking about women and women's art on which it relied' (ix).
- 26 This is a mistake in two senses. First, as I explain below, sex need not be understood in essentialist terms. Second, some French gynocentrists like Kristeva, for example, explicitly criticize feminist tendencies toward essentialism. Klinger ('Aesthetics' 350) similarly suggests that labeling such views 'essentialist' is overly simplistic in many instances.
- 27 See Iris Marion Young's trenchant analysis, 'Menstrual Meditations', in *On Female Body Experience*. Young draws explicitly from de Beauvoir.
- 28 Some French feminists, for instance, argue that women imagine, express themselves, and experience art somatically (Cixous and Clément; Cixous in Robinson; Irigaray) or experimentally (Kristeva), and that these distinctive methods require standards, concepts, and definitions of art that differ qualitatively from the traditional ones. See Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics* ch. 6, for a perceptive and sensitive analysis of some of these thinkers. With respect to the visual arts, also see San MacColl's insightful essay, 'A Woman on Paper' in Hein and Korsmeyer 150–68, about artists like Georgia O'Keefe and Judy Chicago.
- 29 See Parker and Pollock; Battersby; Freeland, *But Is It Art?* ch. 5; Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics* 29ff.
- 30 See Klinger, 'Concepts of the Sublime'; Gould, in Brand and Korsmeyer; Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics* ch. 2 and 6.
- 31 Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*; 'Perceptions, Pleasures, Arts'; *Gender and Aesthetics* ch. 4, 'Deep Gender'.
- 32 As Brand and Devereaux put it in the introduction to their recent collection, 'feminists have called attention to the interests embedded in purportedly disinterested responses to art' (ix).
- 33 See note 20.
- 34 Katy Deepwell articulates the point clearly in her important collection, *New Feminist Art Criticism*: 'Feminism's critique of the disinterested observer exposed the partisan nature of all readings (when that "neutral" figure was identified as white, male and middle-class), and began to explore how reading is inevitably informed by political positions' (8). Recently, Korsmeyer summarizes the view: '[feminists have concluded] not only that a neutral, universal point of view is impossible, but that any attempt to formulate it will be distorted by the class, gender, national, and historical perspective of the formulator' (*Gender and Aesthetics* 56).
- 35 'The dominant aesthetic ideology' is a phrase used by Cornelia Klinger ('Aesthetics') as she summarizes the many feminists who criticize the masculine character and male bias of traditional aesthetics.
- 36 Here are just a couple of examples of this view which has now become commonplace in feminist aesthetics. Hilde Hein wrote in 1995: 'The list of abandoned problems includes the characteriza-

tion of aesthetic “disinterestedness,” the distinction between various art forms, as well as differences between craft and art, high art and popular art, useful and decorative arts, the sublime and the beautiful, originality, and many puzzles that have to do with the cognitive versus the affective character of aesthetic experience’ (455). And in her introduction to the 1993 volume, *Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective*, Korsmeyer writes: ‘one of the revisions feminism implies is the abandonment of the doctrine that a disinterested state of contemplative attention characterizes aesthetic appreciation and appropriate apprehension of art ... In this volume one finds no attempt to characterize the nature of appreciation and attention to art in any way that is general or universally binding. Gone as well is the idea that matters of “aesthetic quality” can be isolated from their traditional contraries’ (viii).

- 37 See, for instance, Hein and Lauter in Hein and Korsmeyer.
- 38 See, for instance, Nussbaum.
- 39 Louise Antony asks similar questions with respect to epistemic bias (136).
- 40 Even if it is true, practically speaking, that neutrality is impossible, this does not mean that we should relinquish it as an *ideal*. After all, it is this very ideal that makes it possible to formulate a concept of distortion and bias in the first place.
- 41 The latter is one project that feminist epistemologists set for themselves. See: Antony; Wylie; Anderson esp. 24–5.
- 42 For example, current editions of major art history textbooks like Janson now prominently feature a handful of female artists. And the *Guerrilla Girls’ Bedside Companion* have written their own companion to such textbooks that adds even more female artists to the canon.
- 43 For one attempt, see Eaton, my criticism of Titian’s *Rape of Europa*, one of the most prized works of the Italian Renaissance. Art historian Diane Wolfthal asks similar questions about the entire tradition of what she calls ‘heroic rape paintings.’
- 44 <<http://www.nmwa.org/>>.
- 45 I should note that it is rarely clear in such explanations whether the gendering of the concept is taken to be the, or part of the, *cause* of the concept’s dismissal or whether the concept’s gendering is simply one way of expressing that dismissal. I find the former untenable (because ‘femininity’ rarely figures into philosophers’ substantive reasons for dismissing the body), whereas the latter seems to take the feminist bite out of the project of recuperating the body for philosophical attention (because what is needed is (a) to stop construing the feminine as a term of derision and (b) to block

the traditional association of the bodily with women).

- 46 As mentioned earlier, Grillo offers a clear introduction to the concept of intersectionality.

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Appreciation and the Natural Environment

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I

With art objects there is a straightforward sense in which we know both what and how to aesthetically appreciate. We know *what* to appreciate in that, first, we can distinguish a work and its parts from that which is not it nor a part of it. And, second, we can distinguish its aesthetically relevant aspects from its aspects without such relevance. We know that we are to appreciate the sound of the piano in the concert hall and not the coughing which interrupts it; we know that we are to appreciate that a painting is graceful, but not that it happens to hang in the Louvre. In a similar vein, we know *how* to appreciate in that we know what “acts of aspection” to perform in regard to different works. Ziff says:

... to contemplate a painting is to perform one act of aspection; to scan it is to perform another; to study, observe, survey, inspect, examine, scrutinise, etc., are still other acts of aspection.

... I survey a Tintoretto, while I scan an H. Bosch. Thus I step back to look at the Tintoretto,

up to look at the Bosch. Different actions are involved. Do you drink brandy in the way you drink beer?¹

It is clear that we have such knowledge of what and how to aesthetically appreciate. It is, I believe, also clear what the grounds are for this knowledge. Works of art are our own creations; it is for this reason that we know what is and what is not a part of a work, which of its aspects are of aesthetic significance, and how to appreciate them. We have made them for the purpose of aesthetic appreciation; in order for them to fulfill this purpose this knowledge must be accessible. In making an object we know what we make and thus its parts and its purpose. Hence in knowing what we make we know what to do with that which we make. In the more general cases the point is clear enough: In creating a painting, we know that what we make is a painting. In knowing this we know that it ends at its frame, that its colors are aesthetically important, but where it hangs is not, and that we are to look at it rather than, say, listen to it. All this is involved in what it is to be a painting. Moreover, this point holds for more particular cases as well. Works of different particular types have different kinds of boundaries, have different foci of aesthetic significance, and perhaps most important demand different acts of aspection. In knowing the type we know what and how to appreciate. Ziff again:

Allen Carlson, “Appreciation and the Natural Environment” in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37(3), 1979, pp. 267–275. Reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons.

Generally speaking, a different act of aspection is performed in connection with works belonging to different schools of art, which is why the classification of style is of the essence. Venetian paintings lend themselves to an act of aspection involving attention to balanced masses: contours are of no importance, for they are scarcely to be found. The Florentine school demands attention to contours, the linear style predominates. Look for light in a Claude, for color in a Bonnard, for contoured volume in a Signorelli.²

I take the above to be essentially beyond serious dispute, except as to the details of the complete account. If it were not the case, our complementary institutions of art and of the aesthetic appreciation of art would not be as they are. We would not have the artworld which we do. But the subject of this paper is not art nor the artworld. Rather: it is the aesthetic appreciation of nature. The question I wish to investigate is the question of what and how to aesthetically appreciate in respect to natural environment. It is of interest since the account which is implicit in the above remarks and which I believe to be the correct account for art cannot be applied to the natural environment without at least some modification. Thus initially the questions of what and how to appreciate in respect to nature appear to be open questions.

II

In this section I consider some paradigms of aesthetic appreciation which *prima facie* seem applicable as models for the appreciation of the natural environment. In this I follow tradition to some extent in that these paradigms are ones which have been offered as or assumed to be appropriate models for the appreciation of nature. However, I think we will discover that these models are not as promising as they may initially appear to be.

The first such paradigm I call the object model. In the artworld non-representational sculpture best fits this model of appreciation. When we appreciate such sculpture we appreciate it as the actual physical object which it is. The qualities to be aesthetically appreciated are the sensuous and design qualities of the actual object and perhaps

certain abstract expressive qualities. The sculpture need not represent anything external to itself; it need not lead the appreciator beyond itself: it may be a self-contained aesthetic unit. Consider a Brancusi sculpture, for example, the famous *Bird In Space* (1919). It has no representational connections with the rest of reality and no relational connections with its immediate surroundings and yet it has significant aesthetic qualities. It glistens, has balance and grace, and expresses flight itself.

Clearly it is possible to aesthetically appreciate an object of nature in the way indicated by this model. For example, we may appreciate a rock or a piece of driftwood in the same way as we appreciate a Brancusi sculpture: we actually or contemplatively remove the object from its surroundings and dwell on its sensuous and design qualities and its possible expressive qualities. Moreover, there are considerations which support the plausibility of this model for appreciation of the natural environment. First, natural objects are in fact often appreciated in precisely this way: mantel pieces are littered with pieces of rock and driftwood. Second, the model fits well with one feature of natural objects: such objects, like the Brancusi sculpture, do not have representational ties to the rest of reality. Third and most important, the model involves an accepted, traditional aesthetic approach. As Sparshott notes, "When one talks of the aesthetic this or that, one is usually thinking of it as entering into a subject/object relation."³

In spite of these considerations, however, I think there are aspects of the object model which make it inappropriate for nature. Santayana, in discussing the aesthetic appreciation of nature (which he calls the love of nature) notes that certain problems arise because the natural landscape has "indeterminate form." He then observes that although the landscape contains many objects which have determinate forms, "if the attention is directed specifically to them, we have no longer what, by a curious limitation of the word, is called the love of nature."⁴ I think this limitation is not as curious as Santayana seems to think it is. The limitation marks the distinction between appreciating nature and appreciating the objects of nature. The importance of this distinction is seen by realizing the difficulty of appreciating nature by means of the object model. For

example, on one understanding of the object model, the objects of nature when so appreciated become “ready-mades” or “found art.” The art-world grants “artistic enfranchisement” to a piece of driftwood just as it has to Duchamp’s urinal or to the real Brillo cartons discussed by Danto.⁵ If this magic is successful the result is art. Questions of what and how to aesthetically appreciate are answered, of course, but in respect to art rather than nature; the appreciation of nature is lost in the shuffle. Appreciating sculpture which was once driftwood is no closer to appreciating nature than is appreciating a totem pole which was once a tree or a purse which was once a sow’s ear. In all such cases the conversion from nature to art (or artifact) is complete; only the means of conversion are different.

There is, however, another understanding of how the object model applies to the objects of nature. On this understanding natural objects are simply (actually or contemplatively) removed from their surroundings, but they do not become art, they remain natural objects. Here we do not appreciate the objects *qua* art objects, but rather *qua* natural objects. We do not consider the rock on our mantel a ready-made sculpture, we consider it only an aesthetically pleasing rock. In such a case, as the example of non-representational sculpture suggests, our appreciation is limited to the sensuous and design qualities of the natural object and perhaps a few abstract expressive qualities: Our rock has a wonderfully smooth and gracefully curved surface and expresses solidity.

The above suggests that, even when it does not require natural objects to be seen as art objects, the object model imposes a certain limitation on our appreciation of natural objects. The limitation is the result of the removal of the object from its surroundings which the object model requires in order even to begin to provide answers to questions of what and how to appreciate. But in requiring such a removal the object model becomes problematic. The object model is most appropriate for those art objects which are self-contained aesthetic units. These objects are such that neither the environment of their creation nor the environment of their display are aesthetically relevant: the removal of a self-contained art object from its environment of creation will not vary its aesthetic qualities and the environment

of display of such an object should not affect its aesthetic qualities. However, natural objects possess what we might call an organic unity with their environment of creation: such objects are a part of and have developed out of the elements of their environments by means of the forces at work within those environments. Thus the environments of creation are aesthetically relevant to natural objects. And for this reason the environments of display are equally relevant in virtue of the fact that these environments will be either the same as or different from the environments of creation. In either case the aesthetic qualities of natural objects will be affected. Consider again our rock: on the mantel it may seem wonderfully smooth and gracefully curved and expressive of solidity, but in its environment of creation it will have more and different aesthetic qualities – qualities which are the product of the relationship between it and its environment. It is here expressive of the particular forces which shaped and continue to shape it and displays for aesthetic appreciation its place in and its relation to its environment. Moreover, depending upon its place in that environment it may not express many of those qualities, for example, solidity, which it appears to express when on the mantle.

I conclude that the object model, even without changing nature into art, faces a problem as a paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. The problem is a dilemma: either we remove the object from its environment or we leave it where it is. If the object is removed, the model applies to the object and suggests answers to the questions of what and how to appreciate. But the result is the appreciation of a comparatively limited set of aesthetic qualities. On the other hand if the object is not removed, the model seemingly does not constitute an adequate model for a very large part of the appreciation which is possible. Thus it makes little headway with the what and how questions. In either case the object model does not provide a successful paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. It appears after all not a very “curious limitation” that when our attention is directed specifically toward the objects in the environment it is not called the love of nature.

The second paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature I call the scenery or landscape model. In the artworld this model of appreciation

is illustrated by landscape painting; in fact the model probably owes its existence to this art form. In one of its favored senses "landscape" means a prospect – usually a grandiose prospect – seen from a specific standpoint and distance; a landscape painting is traditionally a representation of such a prospect.⁶ When aesthetically appreciating landscape paintings (or any representative paintings, for that matter) the emphasis is not on the actual object (the painting) nor on the object represented (the actual prospect); rather it is on the representation of the object and its represented features. Thus in landscape painting the appreciative emphasis is on those qualities which play an essential role in representing a prospect: visual qualities related to coloration and overall design. These are the qualities which are traditionally significant in landscape painting and which are the focus of the landscape model of appreciation. We thus have a model of appreciation which encourages perceiving and appreciating nature as if it were a landscape painting, as a grandiose prospect seen from a specific standpoint and distance. It is a model which centers attention on those aesthetic qualities of color and design which are seen and seen at a distance.

It is quite evident that the scenery or landscape model has been historically significant in our aesthetic appreciation of nature.⁷ For example, this model was evident in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the use of the "Claude-glass," a small, tinted, convex mirror with which tourists viewed the landscape. Thomas West's popular guidebook to the Lake District (first published in 1778) says of the glass:

... where the objects are great and near, it removes them to a due distance, and shews them in the soft colours of nature, and most regular perspective the eye can perceive, art teach, or science demonstrate... to the glass is reserved the finished picture, in highest colouring, and just perspective.⁸

In a somewhat similar fashion, the modern tourist reveals his preference for this model of appreciation by frequenting "scenic viewpoints" where the actual space between the tourist and the prescribed "view" often constitutes "a due distance" which aids the impression of "soft colours of

nature, and the most regular perspective the eye can perceive, art teach, or science demonstrate." And the "regularity" of the perspective is often enhanced by the positioning of the viewpoint itself. Moreover, the modern tourist also desires "the finished picture, in highest colouring, and just perspective"; whether this be the "scene" framed and balanced in his camera's viewfinder, the result of this in the form of a kodachrome slide, and/or the "artistically" composed postcard and calendar reproductions of the "scene" which often attract more appreciation than that which they "reproduce." R. Rees has described the situation as follows:

... the taste has been for a view, for scenery, not for landscape in the original Dutch – and present geographical – meaning of [the] term, which denotes our ordinary, everyday surroundings. The average modern sightseer, unlike many of the Romantic poets and painters who were accomplished naturalists, is interested *not* in natural forms and processes, but in a prospect.⁹

It is clear that in addition to being historically important, the landscape model, like the object model, gives us at least initial guidelines as to what and how to appreciate in regard to nature. We appreciate the natural environment as if it were a landscape painting. The model requires dividing the environment into scenes or blocks of scenery, each of which is to be viewed from a particular point by a viewer who is separated by the appropriate spatial (and emotional?) distance. A drive through the country is not unlike a walk through a gallery of landscape paintings. When seen in this light, this model of appreciation causes a certain uneasiness in a number of thinkers. Some, such as ecologist Paul Shepard, seemingly believe this kind of appreciation of the natural environment so misguided that they entertain doubts about the wisdom of *any* aesthetic approach to nature.¹⁰ Others find the model to be ethically suspect. For example, after pointing out that the modern sightseer is interested only in a prospect, Rees concludes:

In this respect the Romantic Movement was a mixed blessing. In certain phases of its development it stimulated the movement for the protection of nature, but in its picturesque phase it

simply confirmed our anthropocentrism by suggesting that nature exists to please as well as to serve us. Our ethics, if the word can be used to describe our attitudes and behaviour toward the environment, have lagged behind our aesthetics. It is an unfortunate lapse which allows us to abuse our local environments and venerate the Alps and the Rockies.¹¹

What has not been as generally noted, however, is that this model of appreciation is suspect not only on ethical grounds, but also on aesthetic grounds. The model requires us to view the environment as if it were a static representation which is essentially "two dimensional." It requires the reduction of the environment to a scene or view. But what must be kept in mind is that the environment is not a scene, not a representation, not static, and not two dimensional. The point is that the model requires the appreciation of the environment not as what it is and with the qualities it has, but rather as something which it is not and with qualities it does not have. The model is in fact inappropriate to the actual nature of the object of appreciation. Consequently it not only, as the object model, unduly limits our appreciation – in this case to visual qualities related to coloration and overall design, it also misleads it. Hepburn puts this point in a general way:

Supposing that a person's aesthetic education . . . instills in him the attitudes, the tactics of approach, the expectations proper to the appreciation of art works only, such a person will either pay very little aesthetic heed to natural objects or else heed them in the wrong way. He will look – and of course look in vain – for what can be found and enjoyed only in art.¹²

III

I conclude that the landscape model, as the object model, is inadequate as a paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. However, the reason for its inadequacy is instructive. The landscape model is made inadequate because it is inappropriate to the nature of the natural environment. Perhaps to see what and how to appreciate in respect to the natural environment, we must consider the nature of that environment more carefully. In this regard there are two rather

obvious points which I wish to emphasize. The first is that the natural environment is an environment; the second is that it is natural.

When we conceptualize the natural environment as "nature" I think we are tempted to think of it as an object. When we conceptualize it as "landscape" we are certainly led to thinking of it as scenery. Consequently perhaps the concept of the "natural environment" is somewhat preferable. At least it makes explicit that it is an environment which is under consideration. The object model and the landscape model each in its own way fail to take account of this. But what is involved in taking this into account? Here I wish initially to follow up some remarks made by Sparshott. He suggests that to consider something environmentally is primarily to consider it in regard to the relation of "self to setting," rather than "subject to object" or "traveler to scene."¹³ An environment is the setting in which we exist as a "sentient part"; it is our surroundings. Sparshott points out that as our surroundings, our setting, the environment is that which we take for granted, that which we hardly notice – it is necessarily unobtrusive. If any one part of it becomes obtrusive, it is in danger of being seen as an object or a scene, not as our environment. As Sparshott says, "When a man starts talking about 'environmental values' we usually take him to be talking about aesthetic values of a background sort."¹⁴

The aesthetic values of the environment being primarily background values has obvious ramifications for the questions of what and how to appreciate. In regard to what to appreciate this suggests the answer "everything," for in an essentially unobtrusive setting there seems little basis for including and excluding. I will return to this shortly. In regard to how to appreciate, the answer suggested is in terms of all those ways in which we normally are aware of and experience our surroundings. Sparshott notes that "if environmental aspects are background aspects, eye and ear lose part of their privilege" and goes on to mention smell, touch, and taste, and even warmth and coolness, barometric pressure and humidity as possibly relevant.¹⁵ This points in the right direction, but as Sparshott also notes, it seems to involve a difficulty: that "the concept of the aesthetic tugs in a different direction" – the direction of the subject/object relation involving primarily the visual scrutiny of an aesthetic object.¹⁶

However, I do not think this difficulty need be as serious as Sparshott seems to think. I suspect the apparent tension here is not due to the concept of the aesthetic being necessarily tied to the subject/object relation or to the visual, but rather is due to its being antithetical to the appreciation of anything only as unobtrusive background. To confirm this we need to consider the concept of the aesthetic as it is elaborated by John Dewey in *Art as Experience*.¹⁷ Dewey's concept is such that anything which is aesthetically appreciated must be obtrusive, it must be foreground, but it need not be an object and it need not be seen (or only seen). Moreover, to assume that that which is aesthetically appreciated need be an object or only seen is to confine aesthetic appreciation to either the object model or the landscape model, which, as we have noted, impose unacceptable limitations on the aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment.

I suggest then that the beginning of an answer to the question of *how* to aesthetically appreciate an environment is something like the following: We must experience our background setting in all those ways in which we normally experience it, by sight, smell, touch, and whatever. However, we must experience it not as unobtrusive background, but as obtrusive foreground! What is involved in such an "act of aspection" is not completely clear. Dewey gives us an idea in remarks such as:

To grasp the sources of esthetic experience it is . . . necessary to have recourse to animal life below the human scale. . . . The live animal is fully present, all there, in all of its actions: in its wary glances, its sharp sniffing, its abrupt cocking of ears. All senses are equally on the *qui vive*.¹⁸

And perhaps the following description by Yi-Fu Tuan gives some further indication:

An adult must learn to be yielding and careless like a child if he were to enjoy nature polymorphously. He needs to slip into old clothes so that he could feel free to stretch out on the hay beside the brook and bathe in a meld of physical sensations: the smell of the hay and of horse dung; the warmth of the ground, its hard and soft contours; the warmth of the sun tempered by breeze; the tickling of an ant making its way up the calf

of his leg; the play of shifting leaf shadows on his face; the sound of water over the pebbles and boulders, the sound of cicadas and distant traffic. Such an environment might break all the formal rules of euphony and aesthetics, substituting confusion for order, and yet be wholly satisfying.¹⁹

Tuan's account as to how to appreciate fits well with our earlier answer to the question of what to appreciate, *viz.* everything. This answer, of course, will not do. We cannot appreciate everything; there must be limits and emphasis in our aesthetic appreciation of nature as there are in our appreciation of art. Without such limits and emphases our experience of the natural environment would be *only* "a meld of physical sensations" without any meaning or significance. It would be a Jamesian "blooming, buzzing confusion" which truly substituted "confusion for order" and which, I suspect contra to Tuan, would not be wholly satisfying. Such experience would be too far removed from our aesthetic appreciation of art to merit the label "aesthetic" or even the label "appreciation." Consider again the case of art. In this case, as noted in Section I, the boundaries and foci of aesthetic significance of works of art are a function of the type of art in question, e.g., paintings end at their frames and their colors are significant. Moreover, I suggested that our knowledge of such matters is due to art works being our creations. Here it is relevant to note the second point which I wish to emphasize about natural environments: they are natural. The natural environment is not a work of art. As such it has no boundaries or foci of aesthetic significance which are given as a result of our creation nor of which we have knowledge because of our involvement in such creation.

The fact that nature is natural – not our creation – does not mean, however, that we must be without knowledge of it. Natural objects are such that we can discover things about them which are independent of any involvement by us in their creation. Thus although we have not created nature, we yet know a great deal about it. This knowledge, essentially common sense/ scientific knowledge, seems to me the only viable candidate for playing the role in regard to the appreciation of nature which our knowledge of types of art, artistic traditions, and the like plays in regard to

the appreciation of art. Consider the aesthetic appreciation of an environment such as that described by Tuan. We experience the environment as obtrusive foreground – the smell of the hay and of the horse dung, the feel of the ant, the sound of the cicadas and of the distant traffic all force themselves upon us. We experience a “meld of sensations” but, as noted, if our state is to be aesthetic appreciation rather than just the having of raw experience, the meld cannot be simply a “blooming, buzzing confusion.” Rather it must be what Dewey called a consummatory experience: one in which knowledge and intelligence transform raw experience by making it determinate, harmonious, and meaningful. For example, in order for there to be aesthetic appreciation we must recognize the smell of the hay and that of the horse dung and perhaps distinguish between them; we must feel the ant at least as an insect rather than as, say, a twitch. Such recognizing and distinguishing results in certain aspects of the obtrusive foreground becoming foci of aesthetic significance. Moreover, they are natural foci appropriate to the particular natural environment we are appreciating. Likewise our knowledge of the environment may yield certain appropriate boundaries or limits to the experience. For example, since we are aesthetically appreciating a certain kind of environment, the sound of cicadas may be appreciated as a proper part of the setting, while the sound of the distant traffic is excluded much as we ignore the coughing in the concert hall.

What I am suggesting is that the question of *what* to aesthetically appreciate in the natural environment is to be answered in a way analogous to the similar question about art. The difference is that in the case of the natural environment the relevant knowledge is the common sense/scientific knowledge which we have discovered about the environment in question. This knowledge gives us the appropriate foci of aesthetic significance and the appropriate boundaries of the setting so that our experience becomes one of aesthetic appreciation. If to aesthetically appreciate art we must have knowledge of artistic traditions and styles within those traditions, to aesthetically appreciate nature we must have knowledge of the different environments of nature and of the systems and elements within those environments. In the way in which the art

critic and the art historian are well equipped to aesthetically appreciate art, the naturalist and the ecologist are well equipped to aesthetically appreciate nature.²⁰

The point I have now made about what to appreciate in nature also has ramifications for how to appreciate nature. When discussing the nature of an environment, I suggested that Tuan’s description seems to indicate a general act of aspection appropriate for any environment. However, since natural environments differ in type it seems that within this general act of aspection there might be differences which should be noted. To aesthetically appreciate an environment we experience our surroundings as obtrusive foreground allowing our knowledge of that environment to select certain foci of aesthetic significance and perhaps exclude others, thereby limiting the experience. But certainly there are also different kinds of appropriate acts of aspection which can likewise be selected by our knowledge of environments. Ziff tells us to look for contours in the Florentine school and for color in a Bonnard, to survey a Tintoretto and to scan a Bosch. Consider different natural environments. It seems that we must survey a prairie environment, looking at the subtle contours of the land, feeling the wind blowing across the open space, and smelling the mix of prairie grasses and flowers. But such an act of aspection has little place in a dense forest environment. Here we must examine and scrutinize, inspecting the detail of the forest floor, listening carefully for the sounds of birds and smelling carefully for the scent of spruce and pine. Likewise, the description of environmental appreciation given by Tuan, in addition to being a model for environmental acts of aspection in general, is also a description of the act of aspection appropriate for a particular kind of environment – one perhaps best described as pastoral. Different natural environments require different acts of aspection; and as in the case of what to appreciate, our knowledge of the environment in question indicates how to appreciate, that is, indicates the appropriate act of aspection.

The model I am thus presenting for the aesthetic appreciation of nature might be termed the environmental model. It involves recognizing that nature is an environment and thus a setting within which we exist and which we normally

experience with our complete range of senses as our unobtrusive background. But our experience being aesthetic requires unobtrusive background to be experienced as obtrusive foreground. The result is the experience of a "blooming, buzzing confusion" which in order to be appreciated must be tempered by the knowledge which we have discovered about the natural environment so experienced. Our knowledge of the nature of the particular environments yields the appropriate boundaries of appreciation, the particular foci of aesthetic significance, and the relevant act or acts of aspection for that type of environment. We thus have a model which begins to give answers to the questions of what and how to appreciate in respect to the natural environment and which seems to do so with due regard for the nature of that environment. And this is important not only for aesthetic but also for moral and ecological reasons.

IV

In this paper I have attempted to open discussion on the questions of what and how to aesthetically appreciate in regard to nature. In doing so I have argued that two traditional approaches, each of which more or less assimilates the appreciation of nature to the appreciation of certain art forms, leave much to be desired. However, the approach which I have suggested, the environmental model, yet follows closely the general structure of our aesthetic appreciation of art. This approach does not depend on an assimilation of natural objects to art objects or of landscapes to scenery, but rather on an application of the general structure of aesthetic appreciation of art to something which is not art. What is important is to recognize that nature is an environment and is natural, and to make that recognition central to our aesthetic appreciation. Thereby we will aesthetically appreciate nature for what it is and for the qualities it has. And we will avoid being the person described by Hepburn who "will either pay very little aesthetic heed to natural objects or else heed them in the wrong way," who "will look – and of course look in vain – for what can be found and enjoyed only in art."²¹

Notes

- 1 Paul Ziff, "Reasons in Art Criticism," *Philosophy and Education*, ed. I. Scheffler (Boston, 1958). Reprinted in *Art and Philosophy*, ed. W. E. Kennick (New York, 1964), p. 620.
- 2 Ibid. Ziff is mainly concerned with the way in which knowledge of types yields different acts of aspection. For an elaboration of this point and its ramifications concerning what is and is not aesthetically significant in a work, see K. Walton, "Categories of Art," *Philosophical Review* (1970), 334–67. How our knowledge of art (and the art-world) yields the boundaries between art and the rest of reality is interestingly discussed in A. Danto, "The Artistic Enfranchisement of Real Objects: The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* (1964), 571–84.
- 3 F. E. Sparshott, "Figuring the Ground: Notes on Some Theoretical Problems of the Aesthetic Environment," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (1972), 13.
- 4 George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York, 1961), p. 100.
- 5 Danto, op. cit., p. 579.
- 6 This favored sense of "landscape" is brought out by Yi-Fu Tuan. See *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, 1974), pp. 132–3, or "Man and Nature: An Eclectic Reading," *Landscape*, Vol. 15 (1966), 30.
- 7 For a good, brief discussion of this point, see R. Rees, "The Scenery Cult: Changing Landscape Tastes over Three Centuries," *Landscape*, Vol. 19 (1975). Note the following remarks by E. H. Gombrich in "The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape," *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London, 1971), pp. 117–18: "... I believe that the idea of natural beauty as an inspiration of art ... is, to say the least, a very dangerous oversimplification. Perhaps it even reverses the actual process by which man discovers the beauty of nature. We call a scenery 'picturesque' ... if it reminds us of paintings we have seen. ... Similarly, so it seems, the discovery of Alpine scenery does not precede but follows the spread of prints and paintings with mountain panoramas."
- 8 Thomas West, *Guide to the Lakes* (London: 1778) as quoted in J. T. Ogden, "From Spatial to Aesthetic Distance in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. XXXV (1974), 66–7.
- 9 R. Rees, "The Taste for Mountain Scenery," *History Today*, Vol. XXV (1975), 312.

- 10 Paul Shepard, *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (New York, 1973), pp. 147–8. Shepard made this position more explicit at a lecture at Athabasca University, Edmonton, Alberta, November 16, 1974.
- 11 Rees, "Mountain Scenery," op. cit., p. 312. Ethical worries are also expressed by Tuan, *Topophilia*, op. cit., Chapter 8, and R. A. Smith and C. M. Smith, "Aesthetics and Environmental Education," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (1970), 131–2. Smith and Smith put the point as follows: "Perhaps there is a special form of arrogance in experiencing nature strictly in the categories of art, for the attitude involved here implies an acceptance, though perhaps only momentarily, of the notion that natural elements have been arranged for the sake of the man's aesthetic pleasure. It is possible that this is what Kant had in mind when he said that in the appreciation of natural beauty one ought not assume that nature has fashioned its forms for our delight and that, instead, 'it is we who receive nature with favour, and not nature that does us a favour.'"
 - 12 R. W. Hepburn, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *Aesthetics and the Modern World*, ed. H. Osborne (London, 1968), p. 53. Hepburn implicitly argues that our aesthetic appreciation of nature is enhanced by our "realizing" that an object is what it is and has the qualities which it has. See pp. 60–5.
 - 13 Sparshott, op. cit., pp. 12–13. Sparshott also considers other possible relations which are not directly relevant here. Moreover, I suspect he considers the "traveler to scene" relation to be more significant than I do.
 - 14 Ibid., pp. 17–18.
 - 15 Ibid., p. 21.
 - 16 Ibid., pp. 13–14, p. 21.
 - 17 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, 1958), especially Chapters I–III.
 - 18 Ibid., pp. 18–19.
 - 19 Tuan, *Topophilia*, op. cit., p. 96.
 - 20 I have in mind here individuals such as John Muir and Aldo Leopold. See, for example, Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*.
 - 21 Hepburn, op. cit., p. 53.

Everyday Aesthetics

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IT IS GENERALLY AGREED that aesthetic objects do not constitute a set of special objects, but rather are determined by our attitudes and experiences. A consequence of this view is that, as Jerome Stolnitz claims, “anything at all, whether sensed or perceived, whether it is the product of imagination or conceptual thought, can become the object of aesthetic attention.”¹ The same point is made by Paul Ziff, who contends that “anything that can be viewed is a fit object for aesthetic attention,” including “a gator basking in a mound of dried dung.”²

In light of this consensus, it is both curious and noteworthy that today’s aesthetics is mostly concerned with art. As Thomas Leddy observes, “although many aestheticians insist that aesthetic qualities are not limited to the arts, even *those* thinkers generally take the arts as the primary focus of their discussion.”³ Indeed, the subject matter of aesthetics is dominated by the definition of art, expression in art, artist’s intention, art and reality, art and ethics, as well as the issues specific to each artistic medium. As a result, the aesthetics of non-art is marginalized, attended to only when we discuss beauty and aesthetic experience.

But even discussions of non-art objects and activities often focus on their likeness to art, conflating art and aesthetics. For example, discussing the aesthetic in sport, one author questions whether “any sport can justifiably be regarded as an art form.”⁴ Another contrasts most artists who “do not equate art with cooking ... nor ... hold cooking in such high theoretical esteem” with “chefs through the centuries who have seen themselves as artists.”⁵

It is understandable that the aesthetics of non-art objects and activities are explained through comparison to art, simply because, for better or worse, aesthetics of art is our familiar frame of reference. However, there is also a risk in such comparisons. Non-art objects tend to be regarded as “wannabe” art, which often turn out to fall short of those features characterizing art, such as formal coherence, expressive power, embodiment of an idea, and creativity and originality. Consequently, non-art objects are regarded, at best, as something “like art” or as second-rate art. I find this implicitly hierarchical procedure to be problematic. Particularly with respect to aesthetic matters, pursuing and celebrating diversity is more rewarding and constructive than limiting what counts as worthy aesthetic objects. Just as Paul Ziff reminds us about the different “aspects” required for various works of art,⁶ I believe that diversity of aesthetic objects in general requires diversity of analyses and approaches.

Ignoring the rich diversity of aesthetic objects impoverishes the scope of aesthetics in two respects. First, it represents a rather parochial viewpoint unique to modern Western aesthetic theories, which presupposes the institutionalized artworld and certain cultural and economic conditions.⁷ Second, it unduly limits the range of aesthetic issues by implying that only those related to art are worthwhile for theoretical analysis. I intend to address these limitations in what follows.

The first limitation is simply based upon observation. Most non-art objects and activities concern our everyday experiences of eating, clothing, dwelling, cleaning, and dealing with natural elements. Unlike the institutionalized artworld, these *are* shared universally. In a culture like ours with a distinct artworld, the experience of art is usually limited to special occasions set aside for that purpose, although not all of us have access to or knowledge of the artworld. In contrast, all of us engage in everyday activities and handle non-art objects. Arnold Berleant thus remarks: "the custom of selecting an art object and isolating it from its surroundings ... has been ... most pronounced since the eighteenth century, with its aesthetic of disinterestedness. Yet it is at variance with the ubiquity of the aesthetic recognized at other times in the West and commonly in non-Western cultures."⁸ Other writers also point out that Balinese and Inuit culture lack the Western notions of art and artist because they embrace the aesthetic concerns in everything they do and make.⁹ Likewise, traditional Japanese culture aestheticizes everyday objects, phenomena, and activities, providing a fertile ground for examining those issues neglected by art-centered aesthetics.

In our experience of paradigmatic art, the ingredients of aesthetic experience are determined primarily by conventional agreement and by the artist's control of the material. Painting, for example, is viewed when standing straight, and confined to the visual elements of one side of the canvas circumscribed by the frame. Its smell of fresh paint and relationship to the surrounding wall paper or to the back of the canvas, no matter how intriguing, are intentionally bracketed. Similarly, experience of a symphony consists of sounds conforming to a score created by the musicians on stage. The outside traffic noise, the

cough of the audience, the feel of air-conditioning breeze blowing on our face, and the texture of the seat, are again consciously ignored, though they are part of our experience. Despite controversies regarding what is and is not a part of a work of art, in general, an art object presents itself to us more or less with a determinate frame.

In contrast, the absence of equivalent conventions renders a non-art object "frameless," making us a creator of its aesthetic object. As Ronald Hepburn points out, the aesthetic price we pay for the frameless character of non-art objects, such as the lack of unified design, can be compensated for by exercising our imagination and creativity in constituting the aesthetic object as we see fit.¹⁰ For example, the appreciation of a baseball game may include the noisy cheers of the fans, the hot sun beating down our necks, and the smell of hot dogs, in addition to the quasi-artistic elements such as the players' body movements, the thrill of stiff competition, and the drama of the record-breaking home run. By the same token, New York City's "sense of place" cannot be separated from the smell of burnt pretzels and chestnuts, the feel of vibration and steam coming from below, the chaotic honking of the cabs—though we *can* choose to ignore all of these and concentrate exclusively on its architecture. We also create non-art objects and experiences on a much smaller scale. In appreciating the smell and taste of green tea, I may incorporate the visual and tactile sensation of the tea bowl, as well as the sound of slurping.

Our everyday aesthetic experience does not come to us in a neatly packaged bundle, consisting exclusively of qualities we receive through the "higher senses" of vision and hearing as an uninvolved spectator.¹¹ We sit still and quiet during a classical concert or a theater performance, and we look at a painting or sculpture without touching, moving, or holding it. But what may be aesthetically most appropriate and rewarding when viewing a painting or listening to a symphony is neither suitable nor rewarding when we are engaged in everyday activities. Our current art- and spectator-centered aesthetics cannot adequately account for our equally important aesthetic experience of everyday objects and activities, which almost always engage us bodily.

In this respect, traditional Japanese culture offers rich examples of aesthetic experience

facilitated by body and mind. They include refined sensibility regarding seasonal change and weather conditions felt by the body; the physical and spiritual discipline involved in martial arts; and “a sensual feeling of well-being, of harmony with one’s environment and with one’s self” when taking a Japanese bath, which “go(es) beyond efficiency and transcend(s) physical cleanliness.”¹²

Furthermore, although established as an artistic medium, the tea ceremony is an aesthetic experience of frameless character, which both encourages and challenges the participant to create an aesthetic experience out of many disparate elements. These include some predetermined ingredients, such as the tea hut, utensils, flower arrangement, and snack, but other features are beyond anyone’s control, such as the weather, the sound of birds or of rain hitting the roof, and the spontaneous conversation between the host and guests. This art medium also requires the bodily activities of the participants—going through the tea garden, cleansing the hands and mouths, entering the tea hut, holding the tea bowl, drinking tea by slurping, and eating a snack.

Another feature unique to the tea ceremony suggests the second point of difference between Western paradigmatic art and everyday objects and activities. The aesthetics of the tea ceremony emphasize the singularity of each occasion, expressed by the term *ichigo ichie* (one chance, one meeting). That is, the object of aesthetic appreciation is impermanent, which is often characteristic of the objects of our everyday aesthetic experience. Food is literally gone in a few minutes, weather alters constantly, clothes are changed almost everyday, bodies age steadily (despite our desperate efforts to arrest the process), and the rooms are cleaned and straightened regularly. As Kevin Melchionne points out in his discussion of domestic aesthetics, “unlike paradigmatic art forms like painting or poetry, interiors do not just sit around after their completion unaltered for the centuries. They are lived in, worked in, and worked on and so they are also transformed, if only by being worn upon daily.”¹³ Indeed, there are very few objects in our everyday life that we “freeze” and “keep the way they are” as if they were works of art, except for items which *are* very much like domestic works of art, such as antique furniture, crystal vases, and expensive jewelry.

In contrast, art stays relatively permanent. Interpretations and evaluations may change with time, but the identity of the object itself is supposed to remain the same. So Beethoven’s fifth symphony stays constant, although its performance varies from time to time, conductor to conductor. Physical objects such as paintings and sculptures age and weather, but in general we try our best to keep them in their “original” condition through climate-controlled preservation, conservation, and restoration.

I suspect that the obsession with permanence in art stems from the dominant Western metaphysical legacy, starting with Plato, which privileges permanence, stability, and being as salient characteristics of reality, over change, transience, impermanence, and becoming. However, the identification of reality with permanence is not accepted universally. Many non-Western traditions instead embrace the opposite view: that reality consists of constant flux, transience, movement, and impermanence. Buddhism and Taoism are prime examples of such a view.

Accordingly, transience and impermanence are specifically appreciated in some aesthetic traditions. Again, the Japanese aesthetic sensibility is perhaps most prominent in this respect. According to it, the beauty of something is cherished precisely because of its evanescence. Hence, the favorite symbols for beauty convey the transience of existence, such as falling cherry blossoms, mist, rain, snow and wind; autumn leaves and other materials especially signify the effects of aging. The change and impermanence of many of our everyday objects and activities, therefore, does not necessarily detract from their aesthetic value; they can instead heighten our awareness and enhance the experience.

Art objects also differ from everyday objects and activities in this respect: although they often serve utilitarian purposes, they are primarily created and appreciated for their aesthetic significance. But except for pure spectator sports and other forms of entertainment and amusement, most of our everyday objects and activities are created, used, or performed first and foremost for nonaesthetic purposes. We clean our kitchen and bathroom for hygiene, cook and eat food for nutrition, and select our clothes for protection and comfort. Utensils and furniture are created, used, and appreciated for their respective functional use.

At this point, those who advocate an art-based aesthetic theory may remind us that if we distance ourselves from everyday practical concerns, if we adopt a disinterested attitude, we can attend to the aesthetic values of everyday objects and activities. I have no doubt we can and sometimes do just that. I can, for example, contemplate on my knife as if it were a piece of sculpture. However, doing so would compromise its aesthetic value by unduly limiting various sensory inputs which are all integrated into our everyday experience of this object. The aesthetic value of a knife consists not only of its visual qualities and its feel in my hand, determined by its surface texture, weight, and balance but, most importantly, by how smoothly and effortlessly I can cut an object with it. Or consider, likewise, the aesthetic experience of opening a Japanese package. The several steps involved in opening it thoroughly integrate the functional purpose of protecting and hiding its contents and the aesthetic allure of gradually exposing the object inside. Its aesthetic appeal can only be revealed by opening it.¹⁴

As these examples demonstrate, the aesthetic and the practical cannot be neatly separated. Thus, although it is true that various practical and utilitarian purposes are intimately bound up with our everyday experience, such integration does not necessarily detract from aesthetic value. I believe that it is misleading to recognize the aesthetic value of everyday objects and activities only insofar as they are momentarily isolated from their everyday context and treated as art objects created specifically and exclusively for aesthetic purposes.

Now, the primarily utilitarian purpose of everyday objects and activities has other implications. Because they are created or performed principally for practical purposes, they do not communicate or express a view, idea, worldview, or the like, as most artworks do. Despite persistent debates regarding artistic intentionality, there is no denying that an art object is a vehicle by which an artist tries to communicate or express a certain vision, view, attitude, or idea.

However, on a closer examination, we realize that some important communications and expressions do take place through everyday objects and activities. Indeed, it is remarkable how much our seemingly nonaesthetic daily concerns are dominated by the aesthetic dimension.

For example, various rituals and ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals, express religious commitments, attitudes toward life, and human relationships through the choice of color scheme, music, costume, setting, organization of the ceremonies, and so on. Whether or not we find an emphasis on aesthetics in these rituals excessive and superficial, aesthetics nonetheless plays a crucial role in various cultural practices.

Consider also how often our moral judgment of a person relies on aesthetic concerns. Whether desirable or undesirable, wise or unwise, correct or incorrect, we do tend to make moral judgments on someone's character by evaluating his/her appearance. We make a judgment, sometimes perhaps unwarranted and hasty, upon seeing a person with an unshaven face, disheveled hair, and soiled, tattered, and wrinkled clothes, particularly if we have reason to believe that he can afford to look otherwise, or if he shows up that way at a job interview. In a different context, however, we may judge him to be making a certain "statement" through his appearance. Don't we likewise make an unfavorable judgment on a homeowner if her yard is unkempt and her house disorganized and messy? Or, sometimes our judgment of a person's character depends not so much upon what she says or does but *the way in which* she acts, such as the tone of voice and the facial expression, and the manner in which she performs various physical tasks, such as opening and closing doors. True, the extent to which our assessment of a person relies upon the aesthetic surface is not as thorough as the way in which a person's moral worth was judged *exclusively* by his/her aesthetic capacity and sensibility during the ancient Japanese court period.¹⁵ However, I find it quite remarkable how entrenched our practice is of assessing other people's character, moral virtue, capability, and attitude through their aesthetic manifestations.

By the same token, a certain moral virtue can be conveyed through objects. Consider the way in which Japanese food is served, most of its design principle derived from the aesthetics of the tea ceremony. Its taste, texture, and arrangement embody both respect for nature by maximizing the ingredient's native characteristics and of considerateness by inviting the guest to have fun deciding the order of picking each item with chopsticks. Similarly, Japanese packaging pays

respect to the indigenous qualities of the material and amuses the receiver by requiring several steps for opening it.

In interpreting art, we are careful to distinguish our judgment of the artwork from our judgment of the artist, although many aspects of the artist's life are relevant and necessary for understanding the object. The kind of communication and expression I cited concerning everyday objects and activities, however, *are* taken as embodiment of personal character, and it would be unreasonable to require that we bracket our interest in the other person in our aesthetic experience of these things. In other words, everyday objects and activities provide another way in which the aesthetic surface acts as a vehicle of communication and expression, different from the way in which art functions as such a vehicle.

I want to conclude my discussion by calling attention to a special urgency for exploring everyday aesthetics. The aesthetic sensibility we cultivate and the resultant judgments we make regarding everyday aesthetics and objects often have serious consequences that affect everybody's lives. One such consequence is their effect on the human body, as explored in the recently published *Beauty Matters*.¹⁶

Another consequence is the ecological impact of our *aesthetic* preference regarding nature and environment. Many scientists concerned about ecological issues often lament the fact that the general public tends to protect aspects of nature that are *aesthetically* appealing, such as pandas, whales, seals, and redwoods, but *not* cod, insects, prairies, and wetlands, which may be in more dire need of protection. At a recent landscape ecology conference, one group of landscape planners presented an empirical study which, to their surprise, indicated that the midwestern farmers' land use decision was primarily motivated by *aesthetic*, not economic or pragmatic, considerations.¹⁷ Finally, at another recent sustainable design symposium, a designer for major industries like Nike and Interface Carpet illustrated how the primary obstacle to the public acceptance of ecologically sustainable design is aesthetics.¹⁸ These examples indicate to me that our everyday aesthetic preferences and decisions have serious, far-reaching consequences and certainly deserve aestheticians' long-overdue attention.

Notes

- 1 Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art Criticism*, reprinted in *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics*, ed. John Hospers (New York: The Free Press, 1969), p. 27.
- 2 Paul Ziff, "Anything Viewed," reprinted in *Oxford Readers: Aesthetics*, ed. Susan L. Feagin and Patrick Maynard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 29, 23.
- 3 Thomas Leddy, "Everyday Surface Aesthetic Qualities: 'Neat,' 'Messy,' 'Clean,' 'Dirty,'" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 259.
- 4 David Best, "The Aesthetic in Sport," reprinted in *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, ed. William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier (Champaign: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1988), p. 487.
- 5 Barbara Kafka, "Pleasing the Palette: Food, Cooking and Making Art," *Art News* 88 (October 1989): 163. I thank my student, Bonnie Paisley, for this reference.
- 6 Paul Ziff, "Reasons in Art Criticism," in *Philosophy and Education*, ed. Israel Scheffler (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1958).
- 7 For the relevance of economic class, see Kathleen Higgins's introductory remarks on "Popular Culture and Everyday Life" in *Aesthetics in Perspective*, ed. Kathleen M. Higgins (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996), p. 592, and Thomas Leddy's "Sparkle and Shine," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 37 (July, 1997): 259–73. For gender issues, see Leddy's "Everyday Surface" and Kevin Melchionne's "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (Spring, 1998): 191–200.
- 8 Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), p. 157.
- 9 See Melvin Rader and Bertram Jessup, *Art and Human Values* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 116, and Victor Papanek, *The Green Imperative: Natural Design for the Real World* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1995), p. 233.
- 10 Ronald Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in *Wonder and Other Essays: Eight Studies in Aesthetics and Neighboring Fields* (Edinburgh: University Press at Edinburgh, 1984).
- 11 See Arnold Berleant's *The Aesthetics of Environment* as well as his *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).
- 12 Peter Grilli, *Pleasures of the Japanese Bath* (New York: Weatherhill, 1992), p. 22.

- 13 Melchionne, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
- 14 See my "The Japanese Aesthetics of Packaging," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57 (Spring, 1999): 257–65.
- 15 For the ancient Japanese court sensibility, the best original source is *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shonagon (965?–c. 1020), trans. Ivan Morris (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982). For secondary sources, see Ivan Morris's *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (New York: Kodansha International, 1994); Donald Keene's "Feminine Sensibility in the Heian Era," in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*, ed. Nancy Hume (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995); and Barbara Sandrisser's "On Elegance in Japan," in Higgins's *Aesthetics in Perspective*.
- 16 *Beauty Matters*, ed. Peg Zeglin Brand (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
- 17 Robert Ryan and R. DeYoung, "Understanding Farmers' Motivations for Improving Ecological Health," presented at the Fifth World Congress for the International Association for Landscape Ecology, 1999.
- 18 The Rhode Island School of Design Colloquium on Ecology and Design, October 1999.

Aesthetic Value, Art, and Food

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Introduction

Can a meal be a work of art? Do eating and drinking afford experiences that qualify as “aesthetic”? If so, how do the artistic or aesthetic aspects of foods relate to ethical issues? While moral questions about eating have been under philosophical discussion for a long time, its place in aesthetics is more recent, and the relationship between ethical and aesthetic value is as contentious with food as it is with art.

Eating is both a biological necessity and a cultural practice. Every living creature must nourish itself; however necessary sustenance often comes at the expense of the life of some other living thing. This fact alone opens ethical questions if one considers eating another sentient creature a practice with moral standing. What is more, habits of eating reflect upon character—for eating can be greedy or abstemious, convivial or solitary, enthusiastic or inattentive. Questions about the tastiest things to eat merge with ethical questions about what is appropriate to eat and whether there are potential foods that should be off-limits, for cultural and religious traditions forbid eating just anything that might nourish a human body.

Quite apart from nourishment, eating can afford intense and immediate enjoyment. Food appeals to the senses—most immediately to the senses of taste and smell, but also to vision, touch, and even hearing. With the development of different cuisines one also finds norms of presentation and standards for quality of preparation. Such factors suggest that foods also possess aesthetic value, though this claim requires some defense given traditional concepts of the aesthetic, which usually exclude physical satisfaction. Similarly, the status of food as an art form is more complicated than at first it might appear, for some of the most influential philosophical traditions that have produced aesthetic theories and philosophies of art have not welcomed cuisines into their purview. The reasons for this rejection are closely related to the ethical values that are accorded food, the body, and the necessity of eating.

Recent philosophy has become more receptive than in the past about acknowledging the aesthetic significance of the literal sense of taste and of its objects: food and drink (Kaplan 2012). This change of perspective needs to be understood against the backdrop of centuries of assumptions about the nature of beauty, art, and the human body. Preliminary historical orientation is needed to place the issues in context—or contexts in the plural, for these topics have been treated variously over time by philosophers of different theoretical

orientations. The history that follows chiefly concerns the traditions of Europe and the so-called Western philosophies that trace their origins to classical Greece. This discussion prepares the way for some recent approaches to the aesthetics of food and drink and the ethical complexities that they disclose. Comparison with other philosophical traditions would reveal additional contexts that bestow meanings and values on food and eating.

Food and the Body: Some Enduring Concerns

In the works of two of the founding philosophers of the West, one finds conflicting attitudes towards food and eating, attitudes that represent recurring perspectives on the body and its frailties. In his influential dialogues, Plato takes a notoriously hard line on anything that indulges the body and leads the mind to dwell on its physical vehicle rather than on abstract thinking. His particular type of dualism values timeless spiritual and intellectual existence over physical natures of any sort. Human bodies and the material world in general are temporary and unstable; devoting attention to them poses epistemic dangers—inhibiting the ability to grasp the nature of timeless Truth—and moral dangers—for it deflects the attempt to learn of the Good. This is especially evident with the temptation to pursue bodily pleasures, which the senses of touch and taste present with special force. As Socrates famously pronounced on his death bed, a philosopher should be concerned with neither food and drink nor sex.

Plato's younger contemporary, Aristotle, takes a more moderate approach to eating and its enjoyment. His attitudes about food are also integrated into his ethical theory, which recommends that one seek a mean between extremes when learning to exercise both the emotions and the senses. One of the central virtues of Greek ethics is moderation or temperance, the characteristic that pertains to the way we handle pleasures. Aristotle is no ascetic, and he regards taking pleasure in bodily activities such as eating to be part of a good life. It is the extremes of eating that a virtuous person must avoid: neither deprivation to the point of malnourishment nor overindulgence to the point of gluttony represents virtue.

Plato's general attitude to the body can be found in many other traditions as well. This sort of approach worries that sensuous pleasures can capture attention so powerfully that they lead to both thoughts and actions that violate the prescriptions formed by rational deliberation. Employing the sense of taste for the pleasures it affords might exercise the body at the expense of the soul, and overindulgence in eating and drinking has consequences for health as well as morals. If the food is especially tasty, so much the worse, for the temptation is all the stronger.

Similar sets of values can be discerned in the many religious traditions that prescribe fasting. Depriving the body of sensory satisfaction is a time-honored means to feed the spirit and direct attention away from quotidian needs. Fasting can take on a variety of meanings, from acknowledging the frailty of the body and its physical demands, to prompting thoughts of the importance of fleeting pleasures, all the sweeter when restored and the fast is broken. The many and varied practices of fasting indicate how the values ascribed to eating always entail perspectives on our bodily nature. The idea that overindulgence in sensuous pleasure does not represent a good life is captured not only in Aristotle's doctrine of moderation but also in the cardinal sin of gluttony in traditional Christianity; in ancient sumptuary laws that forestall excessive displays of wealth that may be evident in lavish tables; and in contemporary controversies over the causes and meanings of obesity and eating disorders. Thus far, recognition of ethical considerations attached to food and drink concern the eater: how to promote health and prevent misuse of bodies and minds. Attention is directed to the human being and his or her sustenance rather than to the moral standing of creatures treated as foods, a topic to be addressed shortly.

The putative ethical and epistemic shortcomings of tasting and eating lay the foundation for parallel shortcomings of an aesthetic nature. While there are more or less attractive ways to present food, terms such as "beautiful" are usually reserved for objects that we see or hear, whether in encounters with nature or with art (Sweeney 2007). Because eating satisfies bodily needs, its pleasures are also bodily. What later generations recognized as a distinction between the "aesthetic senses" of vision and hearing and

the “nonaesthetic senses” of taste, touch, and smell, is already present in venerable worries about bodily pleasures. The aesthetic–nonaesthetic distinction receives fuller treatment in the philosophies of taste that emerged in European Enlightenment philosophy.

Aesthetics and Theories of Taste

The term “taste” is used as a foundational metaphor in modern aesthetic theory, for the gustatory sense provides a model for understanding the ability to discern the subtle qualities of objects. The metaphor is founded on several characteristics of literal taste, including the fact that it is only by actually sampling a dish that one can determine its quality—e.g. if the seasonings are in balance or the cooking complete. This sort of first-hand acquaintance also obtains with the good judge of art who determines if a work is beautiful. Gustatory taste, like aesthetic sensibility, is also educable, requiring experience and education in order to become fully discerning. For these reasons, taste represents a facility for making aesthetic judgments that indicate expertise or connoisseurship.

(The sense of taste plays a robust aesthetic role in at least one other philosophical tradition as well, the classical Indian theory of *rasa*, which describes a complex range of sensory and emotional responses to different qualities in art. The two philosophical contexts are quite different, but both note the immediacy and intimacy of aesthetic response when one tastes flavors and is moved by the experience of a work of art.)

With taste playing such a central conceptual role in modern aesthetic theories, one might expect that food would have been accorded aesthetic value readily and automatically. However, this was not the case, for taste and smell—the coordinating gustatory senses—present difficulties that hamper the formulation of an important philosophical objective. In particular, they make it difficult to figure out a “standard” of taste, a necessary normative goal if one wants to avoid a free-for-all regarding the merits of art and aesthetic judgments. Taste and smell were—and often still are—considered highly “subjective” senses. The senses of sight and hearing provide information about the world around that grounds

the development of knowledge, and touch acts as an anchor to assure a perceiver that he or she experiences material reality rather than illusion. But taste and smell appear to furnish little information about anything other than individual responses to substances. By severing aesthetic pleasure from the satisfactions of the body, theorists strove to escape the damaging subjectivism that supposedly prevents literal taste from achieving standards. The putative subjectivity of taste dogs the heels of aesthetics, and in debates about how to locate a standard of taste for judgments about art, contrasts are regularly made to food. About taste there is no disputing, according to the old adage, so it doesn’t matter if tastes for food and drink differ. But genuinely *aesthetic* taste requires some kind of normative standards, for clearly some art is better than others. Thus food enters the philosophical discourse of this time as a point of contrast. The aesthetic senses were identified as vision and hearing, and the old distinction between bodily and intellectual senses was reinforced in the burgeoning literature of early modern aesthetics (Sweeney 2012; Korsmeyer 1999, Ch. 2).¹

Cuisine: Art, Aesthetic Value, Ethics

The rise of modern gastronomy in Europe fostered a body of literature that was attentive to the development of philosophies of taste, and that sought to elevate gustatory pleasures into aesthetic regions and food and drink into the arts. Writers such as Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin and Grimod de La Reynière wrote about the pleasures of the table, the development of discerning taste for food and drink, and the importance of fine preparation of meals (Gigante 2005). These authors promoted the idea that elegantly prepared foods, far from merely assuaging hunger, are gustatory entries into the world of fine art (Sweeney 2012).

The emphasis of the gastronomical writers was invariably on the fine dining of a relatively elite class of people. They focused on the special feasts of those with sufficient leisure to spend time savoring a lengthy sequence of foods. This sort of meal preparation seemed to offer the best candidates for food as an art form, an assumption that is continued in the contemporary notion that

it is fine, gourmet food that especially demonstrates aesthetic accomplishment and artistic merit. Such an approach is reasonable in order to separate well-prepared meals from junk food and dining from gobbling. But it comes with a price: the zone of attention for aesthetic merit is purely the enjoyment of the taste experience. That is, the aesthetic dimension of food is more or less limited to sensory pleasure. The comparison with fine art is accomplished because of the parallels between the discerning perception that is demanded by both art and food, but the profound meanings that art can achieve are omitted from consideration. Literature, painting, music are all art forms that convey expressive meanings, whether propositional or affective. They are also forms that are appreciated by means of the senses of vision and hearing, along with the imagination. Whether the sense of taste is capable of discerning meaning of similar breadth and complexity is a matter of debate and will be addressed again shortly. But it is widely believed that food, however tasty, does not convey or express meanings with propositional content (Telfer 1996).

Emphasizing immediate taste experience and the pleasures it affords also retains a fairly strong distinction between aesthetic quality (flavor and taste pleasure) and ethical implications (judgments about what is eaten, how it is prepared and consumed). As a result, moral meaning remains separable from aesthetic assessment. However, a closer look at the links between sensation and cognition will narrow the distance between the aesthetics and the ethics of eating.

Uniting Aesthetics and Ethics

The concept of the aesthetic has undergone many revisions in the last decades, as has the concept of art, both in philosophy and in the art world itself. Generally speaking, the parameters that were formulated to distinguish aesthetic from other values have become more porous than previously. In addition, as more is discovered about the science of the sense of taste, its hoary reputation as “merely subjective” has been revisited and revised. A reassessment of taste is required before the relationships among aesthetic qualities of foods,

the knowledge they presume, and the ethics of eating can be fully considered.

So long as the sense of taste is believed to refer only to personal responses, it has little traction to command philosophical interest. And the idea that taste is merely relative is ancient and tenacious. The fact is, however, taste is a frequent topic of dispute, and increasing scientific understanding of the machinery of sensation supports the idea that there are many common foundations for taste experiences, no matter how diverse preferences can become. Indeed, taste has a double direction, as it were, for it can refer to the properties of objects (and as such be “objective”) as well as to subjects (whose experience is “subjective”) (B.C. Smith 2007; Shaffer 2007). Gustatory taste thus admits of normative standards—as cooks and wine makers throughout the ages have understood. Unless one retains a restriction on bodily pleasures such that they never qualify as aesthetic in principle, taste rather easily joins the other senses with an aesthetic function. Are these seasonings balanced to perfection? Does this bottle of wine need another year before it is drunk? These are questions that are quite like those raised about whether a film, a piece of music, or a painting is satisfactory in its completion.

Does this mean that food should be included among forms of art? Some distinctions are required even to address this question. In recent decades some artists have begun to use food substances in their gallery works. Sometimes these works are meant to be eaten, other times they serve as a critique of and departure from traditional artistic media (S. Smith 2013). However, the question that is germane here does not refer to foods within the established institutions of the art world, but food that appears on the tables of homes and restaurants. Are these sorts of meals—at least those that are prepared with care—well-understood as art? In a relatively loose sense, the answer can be “yes,” especially if we think of decorative presentations of carefully concocted dishes. There is little to preclude food from the category of the practical or applied arts (Telfer 1996). The similarity between food and fine art can be pursued by noting certain parallels with performance arts, since both are appreciated over a period of time in which they alter and disappear (Monroe 2007).

The degree to which the category of fine art suits foods and their preparation is a more complicated matter, however. The fine arts, a category arguably arising in the early modern period (Shiner 2000), are also the arts for which aesthetic value is considered paramount (as opposed to functional, moral, or religious uses, for arts are produced in all these venues). The appreciation of fine art is analyzed as a kind of aesthetic pleasure. But as already noted, if sensuous taste pleasure is food's sole aesthetic measure, then connoisseurship is more or less the only parallel with the appreciation of art forms such as music and poetry. To go further requires a much stronger case qualifying food and drink as the bearers of the sorts of expressive meaning for which the arts are additionally valued.

In fact, the denial of propositional and expressive meaning to the experience of food and drink is disputable. As anthropologists and sociologists have long observed, social practices of eating bestow meaning on foods, and in the act of eating we understand both what is being eaten and the importance of the contexts of meals. Once one notices the significant roles of eating not only in daily life but also in civic and religious ceremonies, the meanings of food are evident. (For examples see Fletcher 2004.) Recognizing that food has not only aesthetic value in a narrow sense but also cognitive significance establishes that the aesthetic dimensions of foods are not limited to the enjoyments of a connoisseur (Korsmeyer 1999; Heldke 2011). Acknowledging the cognitive significance of food is important independent of the question of whether food ought to be considered an art form.

However, even if one grants that foods can take on meanings in their contexts of serving and consumption, a counter position can be advanced with the observation that it is only those *contexts* that impart meaning, not the food itself. The source of understanding remains *external* to the eating experience because information that is independent of the act of eating is required to supply cognitive content, as the tastes of food alone won't do the job. If this were the case, then the aesthetic dimension of taste would still remain separable from its moral valence. That is, the aesthetic quality could be excellent (yum!) but the moral quality negative (too bad!). A final set of considerations unifies aesthetic and ethical values

in eating, making this separation difficult to maintain.

Some would argue that knowledge about what we ingest does not affect taste experience (Bach 2007). But can this be true? Many tastes are ambiguous without context, and identifying them brings the flavor into focus (Korsmeyer 2011). Unless we know we are eating blue cheese, for instance, its flavor may present as rotten. Sometimes detection of the identity of what is in our mouths entirely changes the valence of the experience, as when one discovers that one has eaten something considered taboo. Retrospective nausea can ensue from this disclosure, and what had seemed a pleasant taste now appears revolting. Separating aesthetic from ethical value in eating would require that there be two distinguishable mental events here: a good taste experience and a judgment that what tastes good is bad to eat. However, recall that "taste" has two directions of reference: the sensation and the substance. Knowledge of the substance is not irrelevant to the presentation of the sensation.

A large zone of ethical value opens when one acknowledges that knowing what one is eating, including how it was cultivated and prepared, can affect one's taste experience. One such context occurs with the now-popular practice of food adventurism, such as cooking dishes from unfamiliar traditions, patronizing restaurants opened by immigrants to one's community, or traveling to sample "exotic" cuisines. These tasting experiences may be respectful and admiring, but if one considers the circumstances that have placed, say, an Ethiopian restaurant in downtown Los Angeles, the possibility of such eating leads one to consider wars, famines, and population displacements (Heldke 2003).

It must be granted that sometimes the foods we eat have ethical valence that must be discovered by means that are indeed external to its aesthetic presentation. Whether a tuna fish sandwich can be linked to the incidental drowning of dolphins in long tuna nets, for example, would not be manifest in the taste of lunch. However, at other times the very suffering of a sentient being is required for a certain taste to be present. Jeremy Strong identifies a category of "cruel food," in which the very taste of the food depends upon a mode of preparation that causes suffering (Strong 2011). Overstuffing a goose for foie gras and

depriving a calf of nutrients to impart a pale color to its meat are two familiar examples of cruel food. In cases such as these, moral valence is present in flavor itself, and ethical and aesthetic properties are inseparable (Korsmeyer 2012). The gourmet intent only on the flavor produced might try to detach the aesthetic and the ethical values of cruel foods, such that aesthetic value remains positive while a moral squeamishness intrudes. But the permeability of cognition and sensation renders this separation at least disputable and possibly untenable.

Recent technology has brought a new eating possibility into the moral arena: artificially grown meats that were never part of the body of sentient beings (Wellin, Gold, and Berlin 2012). This scientific innovation holds out the possibility of re-separating aesthetic from moral values. If laboratory scientists were able to produce flavors that previously were properties of cruel foods, would the tastes of such flavors escape moral worries? Perhaps, for example, one could retain the silken smoothness of foie gras without compromising the comforts of goose or duck. This solution is not without problems, however, considering the fact that tastes are always tastes of something or other. That is, there is always a cognitive dimension to flavor inasmuch as one at least recognizes or presumes the identity of what is tasted. If laboratory-grown meats are enjoyable insofar as they mimic the original source and fool the palate, then the character problem of eating cruel foods has not disappeared. The eater is happily deceived but is still enjoying a substance with a flavor that connotes cruelty. In the far more distant future, it is possible that food production will have developed to the point where eaters taste only essence-of-laboratory. But that possibility veers into the speculative realm of thought-experiment, where one can only guess at what future moral intuitions might be.

Summary

Historically, philosophical theories often separate aesthetic and ethical value into different zones of experience. With food and eating, this separation would divide flavor and enjoyment from moral approval or disapproval of what is eaten. However, taste experience is rarely wholly detachable from

concepts of the substance that produces flavor, so ethical valence can be discovered in taste itself, uniting aesthetic and ethical qualities in eating experiences.

Note

- 1 The sense hierarchy, which grants vision and hearing superior status over taste, smell, and touch, has far-reaching implications for epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Among these is an implicit gender ranking as well, for women are often believed to be more governed by "subjective" attitudes (relying on feeling rather than reason) than are men, whose supposed greater rationality yields more reliable "objective" views.

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Art and Aesthetic Behaviors as Possible Expressions of our Biologically Evolved Human Nature

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No known human culture lacks singing, dancing, drawing, fictional storytelling, or acting. In other words, art is pan-cultural and, to the extent that all participate at least sometimes in such activities, is even universal. Works identified without qualification or hesitation as art by paleo-archaeologists date back at least 40,000 years (Davies) or earlier (De Smedt and De Cruz). Moreover, art behaviors often are self-motivating and intrinsically rewarding. On this basis – that is, because they are ancient, universal, and pleasurable for their own sakes – the ethologist Ellen Dissanayake suggests that art making and appreciation are evolved aspects of human nature. According to her, they are biological adaptations. That is, they improved the reproductive success of our ancestors who passed them to their offspring. As a final result, they have become universal.

Notice that this account presupposes a rather humble notion of art, including folk, domestic, and popular varieties. How and if it applies to *recherché avant-garde* Fine Art is not yet clear. And notice also that the emphasis is more on

psychological dispositions and the behaviors that give expression to them than on the artifacts or events that are produced. If anything is adaptive, it is not such things as songs, novels, or paintings, but the behaviors involved in producing and appreciating them.

Dissanayake is not alone among those with a scientific background in maintaining that art behaviors are an adaptation (see also Miller), and the position is supported by many humanists also (see Dutton and the literary Darwinists discussed below). But many other scientists (Pinker; Tooby and Cosmides) assume as the default that the arts are not adaptive in their own right but rather are byproducts (or ‘spandrels’). In other words, though they are not adaptive behaviors in themselves, they come as a bonus along with other dispositions or traits that are adaptive. For instance, fictional storytelling might be an offshoot of hypothetical practical reasoning and of our propensity to construct narratives about our identities and actions. Still, it can be difficult to adjudicate between the adaptive and byproduct options, and, either way, art is strongly linked to the biological grounding of our human nature. Only the view that art is so distanced from the effects of biological evolution that it must be classed as a purely cultural technology, as maintained by Patel, denies this link.

As an alleged adaptation, when, for whom, and in what ways are art behaviors proposed to have first improved reproductive potential?

The most common view is that art behaviors were adaptive for our distant forebears and, as a result, became universal. It is generally assumed that they continue to provide benefits, but because they are universal, not benefits that produce significant differences in comparative reproductive success. A minority of adaptationists questions the contemporary status of the arts, however. It has been suggested, for instance, that in a modern world of informational overload, our interest in stories might have become maladaptive (Hernadi). The opposite position that art was not adaptive in the past but that it is so now, by helping us adjust to the mismatch between modern and ancestral lifeways (Argyros), is less widely held. The view that art behaviors have only ever been adaptive for a minority of virtuosos is not commonly advocated (but for a related idea, see Nettle and Clegg). The low heritability of artistic genius would normally count against its biological selection. But perhaps the apparent sexual attractiveness of highly successful artists consistently counterbalances this.

In classical Darwinian theory, the units of selection are individuals (or their genes), and the transmission of adaptations is genetic. Many adaptationists about art present theories conforming to this paradigm, though they rarely consider how genetics might operate in this case and prefer instead to see the spontaneous emergence of proto-art behaviors in children as evidence of their biological foundation. There is no inconsistency in holding that individuals are the units of biological selection while identifying the benefits of art behaviors as accruing largely to social groups (Dissanayake; Hernadi), provided that differences in comparative individual reproductive potential are not thereby swamped. However, some other adaptationists about art explicitly adopt a model of group (aka multilevel) selection (Boyd 2009). That is, they think that biological selection also operates between groups as a result of inter-group competition, that inter-group competition sometimes influences potential reproductive success more than intra-group competition between individuals, and that the relevant mode of group-level transmission is largely cultural. Yet more adaptationists identify

the benefits of art behaviors as primarily social without making clear where they stand as regards the units of selection and the different kinds of evidence relevant to distinguishing between them.

Some theorists treat the arts collectively as adaptive. According to Dissanayake, along with play and ritual, they are modes of 'making special.' Miller holds, instead, that they are forms of display with which males attempt to attract the sexual attention of females. Other theorists focus on particular art forms, implying either that different art forms are not adaptive or, alternatively, that each is adaptive in a unique fashion. For instance, Cross argues that the semantic vagueness of instrumental music allows it both to build bridges between otherwise mutually isolated domains of thought and to promote flexibility and harmony in social relations.

The most striking example of art-specific theorizing is the movement known as literary Darwinism (Boyd 2009, 2012; Carroll; Gottschall and Wilson; special numbers of *Style* in 2008 and 2012). Scalise Sugiyama adopts an anthropological perspective and focuses on hunter-forager groups, but most proponents are English literature academics who consider folk tales, poetry, drama, and novels. Many literary critics have applied the ideas of evolutionary psychologists on mate selection, aggression, social competition, and the like to the interpretation of literature. Literary Darwinists go further, arguing that literary behaviors inherit an evolutionarily adaptive function from the oral traditions that preceded them. In this adaptationist camp, as in those for other art forms, the protagonists disagree about what the art form is adaptive for.

What adaptationist advantages have been claimed on art's behalf? Focusing on the individual, it has been argued that proficiency in art behaviors improves sexual status (Dutton; Miller) or social status more generally (Boyd 2009), that it refines perception (Allott) and cognition (Cross), that it promotes identity formation (Ralevski), and that it stimulates sociality (Boyd 2009; Cross; Dissanayake). In the case of literature, it has been suggested that exposure refines our mind-reading skills and the sympathetic comprehension more generally of human psychology, morality, and action (Carroll; Gottschall and Wilson). In terms of wider social benefits, it

is suggested that art affirms group values and identity, facilitates cooperation and entrainment, and immeasurably enhances the power of group action and ritual (Boyd 2009; Cross; Dissanayake). Of course, these various benefits may be complementary, so it is not uncommon to find a given theory listing more than one of them in making its adaptationist case. But thoughtlessly combining claimed advantages can lead to incoherence. It is possible that the group benefits from shared art behaviors that also allow sufficient variation for the individual to distinguish herself from others in her artistic aptitudes, but art cannot at the same time and in the same way both be emblematic of group identity and symptomatic of individuality.

What support can adaptationist accounts of art derive from neuroscience? Innately specified art-specific neural circuits would provide strong support, but either the evidence for these is inconclusive or negative, as in the case of music (Patel), or it is not even considered plausible, as is so with fictional storytelling. While there has been work on the neuroaesthetics of visual art, this is mostly concerned with principles of perception and not with possible evolutionary functions for such art.

A common approach to the topic follows the methodology adopted by evolutionary psychologists. They assume that adaptations represent successful responses to the challenges of the ancient environment in which our distant predecessors came to display psychological and behavioral modernity some 40 or more thousand years ago. Via 'reverse engineering', they try to determine what those challenges were. It is often assumed that our human natures have not changed significantly in the interim and that what was adaptive then is most likely similarly adaptive now.

A now standard complaint is that this method is too speculative. It results in untestable 'Just so' stories. When it comes to issues such as mate attraction, this criticism can seem unduly harsh. It is likely that our reproductively successful fore-runners found signs of health and fertility attractive and that we share many of those same predilections. But when it comes to art behaviors, which leave little by way of archaeological traces and depend on patterns of social organization, cosmological beliefs, and complex lifeways of

which we remain deeply ignorant, it is difficult to gainsay the worry. And the fact is, there are so many different, sometimes incompatible theories on offer, and these theories go so far beyond any available evidence, it is hard to know how to begin to evaluate them.

Besides, our understanding of present-day art practices and their functions may be conceptually tangled. As an illustration, consider literature viewed as adaptive. Where does the adaptation lie? Is it in the propensity to narrativize? So strong is the tendency that it is likely to mark an adaptation, but it is not specifically a literary one. We weave narratives in telling our histories, in planning the future, in analyzing where we are and what to do. What about imaginative fictional thinking? But again, this is the hallmark of practical reasoning – of hypothetically examining the future and counterfactually considering the past – and as such is not distinctive to literature. Well, perhaps the specifically literary adaptation lies in the creation of fictional narratives. But that cannot be correct if lyrics, which present a perspective rather than relate a narrative, could also implement the literary adaptation (Boyd 2012). My point is not that it is impossible to pin down the alleged adaptation for literature of which literary Darwinists speak. Rather, it is to illustrate the conceptual forethought and care that is appropriate to embarking on the enterprise. Unfortunately, literary Darwinists tend to wade in without such preliminaries.

To make matters worse, advocates from the humanities for the idea that the arts are adaptive do not always seem to be clear about what evolutionary explanations require. Arguing that something is important to us and provides noteworthy benefits is not in itself sufficient to demonstrate that that thing was biologically significant for our ancestors' survival and reproductive success. Claiming that we can learn weighty truths from art and that it provides a moral and emotional education, rather than supporting the cause, implies that genetic inheritance does not play a role beyond disposing us to be inquisitive and educable. In addition, there is the concern that the argument may be ideologically motivated. Apparently, it is offered sometimes to show that, because the arts are a part of human nature, the humanities are no less important than the sciences, or alternatively, to oppose prevailing

disciplinary paradigms that assume the cultural relativity of all meaning.

This is not to suggest, however, that we should default to the byproduct hypothesis. It seems to me that the temptation to speculate wildly beyond the evidence is no less apparent here. And without being able to identify the adaptation to which art behaviors stand as a byproduct and without also testing the possibility that, whatever their origins, they have gone on to become adaptive in some new way, neither of which is usually attempted, the byproduct thesis lacks credibility.

Should we then prefer the idea that art is a purely cultural technology with only the most distant connection to very general evolutionary adaptations? After all, there is no denying the cultural malleability of art practices and their local dependence on artifactual technologies. Nevertheless, given how much there is that is universal across art behaviors in different cultures, so that tales of love and loss, crime and punishment, pride and prejudice recur again and again from society to society, and given how art can appeal in such an extraordinarily compelling fashion across millennia, as the cave paintings of the Ice Age do, and in addition, taking into account the cost of art behaviors in terms of time, resources, skill, and energy – given all this, it seems implausible that art is no more than a cultural invention.

We need not settle whether art is an adaptation or a byproduct before we can acknowledge how deeply embedded in human nature it is (Davies). And it is also significant that art behaviors signal among other things, intelligence, emotional sensitivity, creativity, imaginative flexibility, and cooperative social awareness, all of which correlate in turn with biological fitness. Even if we all display art aptitudes, the variety of art types and the degrees with which they can be mastered mean that there will be complex differences between us. So, in addition, art behaviors can serve as informationally rich and nuanced indicators of biological factors relevant to potential reproductive success.

Let us turn now to the aesthetic, broadly conceived here as the beautiful. Given the obvious connection between assessments of human beauty and of sexual attractiveness, we might predict that it will be much easier to link aesthetics and evolution than art and evolution. The problem, though, is that even in the realm of human

beauty, sexual attractiveness is only one version of the beautiful, and it is the wider remit that we need to address.

According to evolutionary psychologists, what we find sexually attractive are signals of health and fertility (Skamel). Bodily and facial symmetry are key indicators of health (Perrett; Skamel). One way of connecting sexual attractiveness to broader notions of beauty is by noting that we also appreciate symmetry in artifacts. One of the earliest examples of aesthetic behavior in a proto-human species dates to 400,000 years ago in the production of about 2% of handaxes (Kohn and Mithen). These were worked far beyond what was functionally required in order to make them symmetrical (and also sometimes to display fossils and minerals in the stone). Moreover, it appears that some of the finest examples were not put to practical use.

The relationship between human beauty and non-human beauty need not be as close as this. If sexual attractiveness tracks health and fertility, then beauty draws us to what promotes our reproductive success. In a similar fashion, we might be drawn also to what in nature promotes our survival and reproductive success. This is the main idea behind evolutionary accounts of the aesthetic preferences we show for environments that are conducive to our survival. We find beautiful those environments that offer food, potable water, safe refuge, ease of navigability, and the like (Kaplan and Kaplan; Orians and Heerwagen). Moreover, exposure to natural, as opposed to urban and suburban habitats, produces benefits to physical and mental wellbeing (Ulrich).

A stronger thesis – that our ancestors found savannah beautiful because this was the habitat in which humanity reached its modern form (Dissanayake; Dutton; Orians and Heerwagen; Tooby and Cosmides) – is harder to agree with. Whereas adults tend to prefer pictures of the habitats with which they are most familiar, young children in the USA and Nigeria show a preference for pictures of savannah, and this has sometimes been interpreted as a vestige of an ancient aesthetic preference (Balling and Falk; Orians and Heerwagen). The response may, however, be conditioned by American yards and playgrounds (though this is challenged in Falk and Balling) or, alternatively, by the comparatively low pictorial complexity of savannah pictures, because it has

been demonstrated that young children prefer less to more complex pictures. Meanwhile, the period in which modern humans evolved was one of extreme, fast fluctuations in climate and environment (Finlayson; Potts) rather than one of stability, as the savannah hypothesis assumes. And it is important to recall that humans are niche constructors who buffer themselves against natural environments. In fact, our social environment is more important in shaping our nature than is the physical one (Davies); other people are our natural habitat. In addition, it appears that we are adapted to have the behavioral flexibility to create technologies allowing us to live in almost any earthly environment.

Having just noted the importance of the social, as against the physical, environment, we can return to the topic of human beauty. Rather than being confined to mate attraction and reproduction, our interest in human beauty is broadly social. It plays a role in self-definition and self-presentation. And it operates more widely as a measure of social performance, taking account not only of physical appearance but also of personality, sociality, emotionality, intelligence, humor, and much more. It is only by adopting this wider perspective on human beauty that it becomes understandable that we find beauty in displays of dignity, compassion, justice, and courage, for instance (Davies).

So far, the implication is that our aesthetic preferences attract us to what promotes our survival and successful reproduction and perhaps also that they repel us from what is potentially harmful or unproductive. On this model, our aesthetic preferences are like many of our emotions: they light up things that matter to us and guide us successfully in negotiating the world. This account plausibly explains how such reactions arose and why they take the form they do. It also helps us to assess the possibility that other species experience aesthetic responses of their own. Such responses would be evolutionarily useful only to intelligent creatures capable of learning from experience and altering their behaviors accordingly. There is no reason to predict that behaviorally inflexible creatures seek and are guided by aesthetic experiences.

This runs counter to a view sometimes expressed by biologists, including Darwin (pt. 1, ch. 3:92; pt. 2, ch. 11:329; pt. 3, ch. 21:616;

see also Prum), that birds and insects choose their mates on the basis of finding their displays to be beautiful. But the underlying supposition – that all positively valenced perceptions are aesthetic – is inappropriately broad. To the extent that their decisions involve awareness, bird and insect choices are more likely driven by lust or a sense of aptness than by a quest for beauty.

We noted above how the emergence of aesthetic sensibilities might have been adaptive, by directing us to what is in our evolutionary interests. But it is important also to note how widely our aesthetic interests range and how, sometimes, they can be maladaptive.

By way of illustration, consider the aesthetic interest we might take in non-human animals. If we find beauty in how precisely they are adapted to their way of life, we are liable to become better hunters as a result. But on the other hand, if we find them appealing as a result of falsifying their natures – for instance, by inappropriately anthropomorphizing them, as we are strongly inclined to do – the outcome for us could be unfavorable sometimes. Animals, fish, and birds can stimulate our delight in strong, patterned colors – as birds of paradise do – or appeal to us because they resemble human babies – as large-eyed creatures and mammalian young often do. Such responses are unlikely to benefit us evolutionarily, however. And finally, we might abstract from their living natures to view them imaginatively as beautiful kinetic sculptures. Almost anything can be approached for the sake of its aesthetic interest, and often, as in this last case, the aesthetic agenda shares little in common with the biological program natural and sexual selection have drawn up for us.

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